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# The Wood Demon.

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*Translated from the Russian by* S. S. KOTELIANSKY.*

## ACT III.

*The drawing room of the Serebryakovs' house. Three doors : one to the right, one to the left, and one in the middle. Time : afternoon. Behind the scene Elena Andreyevna is heard playing Lensky's aria, before the duel, from the opera " Evgueny Oneyguin."*

### I.

Orlovsky, Voynitsky *and* Fyodor Ivanovich (*the latter dressed in Circassian attire with a busby in his hand*).

VOYNITSKY (*listening to the music*) : It's Elena Andreyevna playing . . . my favourite aria . . . (*the music coming to an end*). Yes . . . it's a fine piece . . . It seems never to have been so boring here as it is now. . .

FYODOR : You've never tasted real boredom, my dear fellow. When I was a volunteer in Serbia, there I experienced the real thing ! Hot, stuffy, dirty, head simply splitting after a drinking bout. . . Once I remember sitting in a dirty little shed . . . Captain Kashkinazi was there too. . . Every subject of conversation long exhausted, no place to go to, nothing to do, no desire to drink—just sickening, you see, sickening to the point of putting one's head in a noose ! We sat, in a frenzy, gazing at one another. . . . He gazes at me, I at him ; he at me, I at him. . . We gaze and don't know why we're doing it. . . An hour passes, you know, then another hour, and still we keep on gazing. Suddenly he

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jumps up for no reason, draws his sabre and goes for me. . . Hey presto ! . . . I, of course, instantly draw my sabre—for he'll kill me !—and it started : chic-chac, chic-chac, chic-chac, . . . with the greatest difficulty we were at last separated. I got off all right, but to this very day Captain Kashkinazi walks about with a scar on his face. See how desperately bored one may get. . .

ORLOVSKY : Yes, such things do happen.

(*Enter Sonya.*)

II.

The Same *and* Sonya.

SONYA (*aside*) : I don't know what to do with myself . . . (*walking and laughing*).

ORLOVSKY : Puss darling, where are you going ? Do sit with us a while.

SONYA : Fedya, come here . . . (*taking Fyodor aside*). Come here. . .

FYODOR : What do you want ? Why such a radiant face ?

SONYA : Give me your word that you will do what I ask you !

FYODOR : Well ?

SONYA : Drive over to the . . . Wood Demon.

FYODOR : What for ?

SONYA : Just so . . . just drive over to him . . . ask him why he has kept away so long . . . a fortnight now.

FYODOR : Blushing ! Shame ! Here, Sonya's in love !

ALL : Shame ! Shame !

SONYA : (*covering her face and running away*).

FYODOR : She's flitting about, like a shadow, from room to room and doesn't know what to do with herself. She's in love with the Wood Demon.

ORLOVSKY : She's a glorious little girl . . . I love her. I longed, Fyodor dear, that you should marry her, you won't easily find a better bride. But well, probably God wills it so . . . And what a pleasure and delight mine would be ! I should come over to you, you with your young wife, your family hearth, the samovar chirping away on the table. . .

FYODOR : I'm unskilled in these matters. If the crazy notion of marriage ever came into my head, I should in any case marry Julie. She, at any rate, is little, and of all evils one should always choose the least. And then, too, she's a good housekeeper. . . (*clapping his forehead*). There's an idea !

ORLOVSKY : What is it ?

FYODOR : Let's have champagne !

VOYNITSKY : It's too early and also it's hot . . . you wait a while. . .

ORLOVSKY (*admiringly*) : My sonnie, my beauty. . . He wants champagne, the dear soul. . .

(*Enter Elena Andreyevna.*)

III.

The Same *and* Elena Andreyevna.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*walking across the stage*).

VOYNITSKY : Look at her : she walks and sways from sheer indolence. Fine ! Very fine !

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Stop it, George. It's boring enough without your buzzing.

VOYNITSKY (*barring her way*) : A talent, an artist ! Well, do you look like an artist ? Apathetic, indolent, sluggish. . . So much virtue that, pardon me, it's even unpleasant to look at. . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Don't look then . . . let me go. . .

VOYNITSKY : Why are you pining away ? (*in a lively tone*). My dear, my lovely one, be a good girl ! There's mermaid's blood flowing in your veins, why not be a mermaid !

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Let me alone !

VOYNITSKY : Let yourself go, if only once in your life, fall in love quickly up to your very eyes with a merman. . .

FYODOR : And then flop headlong into the water with him and leave the Herr Professor and all of us waving our hands !

VOYNITSKY : Mermaid, eh ? Love while you may !

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : And why do you go on teaching me ? As if I don't know, without your telling me, how I should live if I had my will ! Like a care-free bird I should fly away from all of you, from your sleepy faces, from your boring, wearisome conversations ; I should forget your very existence in the world, and no one would dare then teach me. But I haven't my own will. I'm cowardly, shy, and it seems to me all along that, if I were to be unfaithful, all wives would follow my example and leave their husbands ; that God would punish me, and my conscience torment me ; otherwise I would show you what a free life is like ! (*going out*).

ORLOVSKY : Dear soul, the beauty. . .

VOYNITSKY : I believe I'll soon begin to despise this woman ! She's shy like a little girl, and philosophises like an old deacon, adorned with virtues ! Curdled milk !

ORLOVSKY : Stop, stop. . . . Where's the professor now ?

VOYNITSKY : In his study. Writing away.

ORLOVSKY : He called me here by letter on some business. Do you happen to know what the business is ?

VOYNITSKY : He can't have any business. He writes rubbish, grumbles and is jealous, that's all.

(*Zheltoukhin and Julie enter by the door on the right.*)

IV.

The Same, Zheltoukhin *and* Julie.

ZHELTOUKHIN : How do you do, all ! (*greeting them*).

JULIE : How do you do, godpa dear ! (*kissing him*). How do you do, Fedya ! (*kissing him*). How do you do, George Petrovich ! (*kissing him*).

ZHELTOUKHIN : Alexander Vladimorivich is at home ?

ORLOVSKY : Yes. He's in his study.

ZHELTOUKHIN : I must go to him. He wrote asking to see me on a matter of business . . . (*going out*).

JULIE : George Petrovich, did you receive the barley yesterday, for which you asked in your note ?

VOYNITSKY : Thanks, I did. How much is it ? We also had something from you in the spring. I don't remember what . . . we must settle our accounts. I can't bear messing up things and postponing settlements.

JULIE : In the spring you had eight quarters of corn, two heifers, a calf, and also butter for your farm hands.

VOYNITSKY : How much does it all come to ?

JULIE : How can I say ? I can't say straightaway without a counting board, George Petrovich.

VOYNITSKY : I'll fetch you a counting board, if you must have one. . . .

(*Goes out and returns with a counting board.*)

ORLOVSKY : Duckie, is your brother quite well ?

JULIE : Thank God he is. Godpa dear, where did you buy that nice tie ?

ORLOVSKY : In town, at Kirpichov's.

JULIE : How pretty. I'll buy one like it for Lennie.

VOYNITSKY : Here's the counting board.

JULIE (*sitting down and rapping the beads on the counting board*).

ORLOVSKY : What a splendid manager God has given Lennie ! A wee thing, hardly visible from the ground, and see how she works away ! See !

FYODOR : Yes, and he's only lounging about, pressing his cheek. Idler !

JULIE : Now, you have confused my reckoning.

VOYNITSKY : Come, let's go to some other room. Into the hall. It's so dull here . . . (*yawning*).

ORLOSVKY : Well, let's go into the hall . . . I don't mind. . . .

(*They go out by the left door.*)

JULIE (*alone ; after a pause*) : Fedya dressed as a Circassian. . . . That's what happens when parents fail to give the right direction. There's no handsomer man in the whole district, clever, rich, and yet no earthly good. . . . Hopeless ! . . . (*rapping on the counting board*).

(*Enter Sonya.*)

V.

Julie *and* Sonya.

SONYA : You're here, Julie dear ? I didn't know. . .

JULIE (*kissing her*) : My dear !

SONYA : What are you doing ? Counting ? What an admirable manager you are—the mere sight of you makes me envious. Julie dear, why don't you marry ?

JULIE : You see. . . . One or two men have been suggested to

me, but I have refused. A real suitor would not want to marry me ! (*sighing*) No !

SONYA : But why ?

JULIE : I am an uneducated girl. I was taken from the high school in my second year.

SONYA : But why did they take you away, Julie dear ?

JULIE : For incapacity.

SONYA (*laughing*).

JULIE : Why do you laugh, Sonya ?

SONYA : There's something queer going on in my head. . . . Julie dear, I am so happy to-day, so happy, that I feel even bored by my happiness. . . . I don't know what to do with myself. . . . Now let's talk of something, come. . . . Have you ever been in love ?

JULIE (*affirmatively nodding her head*).

SONYA : Yes ? Is he interesting ?

JULIE (*whispering in her ear*).

SONYA : Who ? Fyodor ?

JULIE (*affirmatively nodding her head*) : And you ?

SONYA : I too . . . only not with Fyodor (*laughing*). Go on, tell me more. . . .

JULIE : I have wanted to have a talk with you for a long time, Sonechka.

SONYA : Please, do.

JULIE : I want to make things clear. . . . You see . . . I've always been sincerely well-disposed towards you. . . . I have many girl friends, but you are the very best of them all. If you were to say to me : Julie, give me ten horses, or, say, two hundred sheep, I would do it with pleasure. . . To you I should grudge nothing. . .

SONYA : Why are you blushing, Julie ?

JULIE : I'm rather shy of . . . I . . . I am sincerely well-disposed towards you. Of them all you are the very best . . . not proud . . . . What a pretty print you are wearing !

SONYA : We'll talk of the print later. . . . Go on. . . .

JULIE (*getting up*) : I don't know how it's done among clever people. . . . Allow me to propose to you. . . . Make me happy. . . . I mean . . . I mean . . . I mean . . . marry Lennie (*covering her face*).

SONYA (*getting up*) : We'd better not talk about it, Julie dear. . . . No, we'd better not. . . .

(*Enter Elena Andreyevna.*)

## VI.

The Same *and* Elena Andreyevna.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : There's simply no place to sit in. The two Orlovskies and George are lounging about all over the house, and whatever room I go to, they're there. It's simply exasperating. What do they want here ? Why don't they go somewhere else ?

JULIE (*through tears*) : How do you do, Elena Andreyevna ! (*making to kiss her*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : How do you do, Julie dear ! Forgive me, I don't like continuous kissing. Sonya, what's your father doing ? (*a pause*). Sonya, why don't you answer me ? I ask you : what's your father doing ? (*a pause*). Sonya, why don't you answer me ?

SONYA : You want to know ? Come here. . . (*taking her aside*). Well, I'll tell you. . . . My heart feels too pure to-day to allow me to talk to you and go on dissimulating. Here, take this ! (*handing her a letter*). I found this in the garden. Julie, come let's go! (*going out with Julie by the left door*).

VII.

Elena Andreyevna, *and then* Fyodor Ivanovich.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*alone*) : What ? A letter from George to me ! But how am I to blame ? Oh, how harsh and cruel of her . . . Her heart feels so pure to-day that she can't talk to me. . . . My God, what an insult ! My head is dizzy . . . I shall drop. . . .

FYODOR (*coming out by the left door and crossing the stage*) : Why do you always start when you see me ? (*a pause*). Hm ! . . . (*taking the letter from her hands and tearing it to pieces*). You must stop all this. You must think of me only (*a pause*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : What does that mean ?

FYODOR : It means that if I once picked out some one, it's no use her trying to escape from my hands.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : No, it only means that you are an impudent fool.

FYODOR : This evening at half past seven you will be by the little bridge behind the garden and wait for me. . . . Well ? . . . I've nothing more to say to you. . . . And so, my angel, until half-past seven ! (*trying to take her arm*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*giving him a slap on the face*).

FYODOR : Forcibly expressed. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Off you go !

FYODOR : At your service. . . (*walking away and returning*). I am touched. . . . Let's reason it out peacefully. . . . You see . . . I've experienced everything in this world; I have even drunk gold-fish soup once or twice. . . . But I've never yet gone up in a balloon or ever once carried off learned professors' wives. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Go !

FYODOR : In a minute. . . . I've experienced everything. . . . And because of it, there's so much impudence in me that I simply don't know what to do with myself. I mean, I am saying all this to you with this object, that if you ever happen to need a friend or a faithful dog, just turn to me. . . . I am touched. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : I want no dogs. . . . Go.

FYODOR : At your service (*with feeling*). Nevertheless and in spite of all, I am touched. . . . Certainly, I am touched. . . . Yes. . . . (*irresolutely going out.*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*alone*) : My head aches. . . . Every night I dream bad dreams and have a presentiment of something terrible. . . . Yet how horrid ! The young people were born here and grew up together, they thou one another, always kiss one another ; they ought to live in peace and harmony ; but soon, I think, they will all have devoured one another. . . The forests are being saved by the Wood Demon, but there's no one to save human beings.

(*She goes to the left door, but on noticing Zheltoukhin and Julie coming in by that door, she goes out by the middle door.*)

VIII.

ZHELTOUKHIN *and* JULIE.

JULIE : How unlucky we are, you, Lennie, and I, ah, how unlucky!

ZHELTOUKHIN : But who authorised you to speak to her ? You unasked match-maker, you minx ! You've spoilt the whole business for me ! She'll think that I can't speak for myself, and . . . how very common ! I've told you a thousand times that the whole affair must be let alone. Nothing but humiliation and all these hints, vileness, meanness . . . The old fellow must have guessed that I'm in love with her, and is already exploiting my feelings ! He wants me to buy this estate from him.

JULIE : And how much does he ask for it ?

ZHELTOUKHIN : Sh- sh ! . . . They're coming. . . .

(*Enter by the left door : Serebryakov, Orlovsky and Marie Vassilievna ; the latter reading a pamphlet as she comes in.*)

IX.

The same, SEREBRYAKOV, ORLOVSKY, *and* MARIE VASSILIEVNA.

ORLOVSKY : I too, old boy, am not quite fit. The last two days my head and my whole body have been aching. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV : Where are the others ? I don't like this house. It is a labyrinth. Twenty-six huge rooms. They all disperse and you can never find anyone (*ringing*). Ask George Petrovich and Elena Andreyevna to come here.

ZHELTOUKHIN : Julie, you have nothing to do ; go and find George and Elena Andreyevna.

(*Julie goes out.*)

SEREBRYAKOV : One can reconcile oneself to one's ailments, however hard it may be, but what I can't stand is this present mood of mine. I have a feeling as though I were already dead or had tumbled down from the earth on to a strange planet.

ORLOVSKY : It depends on how you look at it. . .

MARIE VASSILIEVNA (*reading*) : Give me a pencil. . . . There's a contradiction again ! I must mark it.

ORLOVSKY : Here you are, Your Excellency ! (*handing her a pencil and kissing her hand.*)

(*Enter Voynitsky.*)

X.

The Same, VOYNITSKY, *and then* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.

VOYNITSKY : You wanted me ?

SEREBRYAKOV : Yes, George.

VOYNITSKY : What is it you want ?

SEREBRYAKOV : Now . . . why are you cross ? (*a pause.*) If I am in the wrong, excuse me, please. . . .

VOYNITSKY : Drop that tone. . . . Let's come to business. . . . What's it you want ?

(*Enter Elena Andreyevna.*)

SEREBRYAKOV : Here's Lenochka too. . . . Sit down, ladies and gentlemen (*a pause*). I have summoned you here, gentlemen, to announce that the Inspector-General is about to arrive. . . But no more joking. It is a serious matter. I have invited you here, gentlemen, in order to ask your help and advice, and knowing your unfailing kindness, I hope you will grant me them. I am a scholar, a bookish man, and I have always been a stranger to practical life. Dispense with the advice of well-informed people I cannot, and I beg you, Ivan Ivanych, and you, Leonid Stepanych, and you, George. . . . The point of the matter is *manet omnes una nox*, that is, we are all in God's hands. I am old, ill, and therefore, I consider it opportune to arrange my property relations in so far as they concern my family. My life is over, I'm not thinking of myself ; but I have a young wife, and a young daughter. To continue living in the country is impossible for them.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : It's all the same to me.

SEREBRYAKOV : We are not made for the country. But to live in town on the income we receive from this estate is impossible. The day before yesterday I sold part of a wood for timber for four thousand roubles ; but that is an extraordinary measure, of which one cannot avail oneself every year. Such measures have to be taken as will guarantee us a constant, more or less fixed, amount of income. I've thought out such a measure, and I have the honour to submit it to your consideration. Without entering into details, I will submit it in its general lines. Our estate yields us an average interest of two per cent. I propose to sell the estate. If we invest the money thus realised in interest-bearing securities, we shall get from four to five per cent. I think there might even be left a surplus of a few thousand roubles, which would allow us to buy a small bungalow in Finland. . . .

VOYNITSKY : Wait a moment, I fancy my hearing is playing me false. . . . Repeat what you've just said. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV : To invest the money in interest-bearing securities and to buy a bungalow in Finland. . .

VOYNITSKY : Not Finland. . . . You said something else. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV : I propose to sell the estate.

VOYNITSKY : Yes, that's it. . . . You'll sell the estate. . . . Admirable, a grand idea. . . . And what's to happen to me and mother ?

SEREBRYAKOV : We will consider all this in its turn. . . . Not everything at once. . . .

VOYNITSKY : Wait a moment. . . . Evidently, up till now I had not a grain of common sense. Up till now I had the stupidity to think that the estate belonged to Sonya. My late father bought this estate and settled it on my sister. Up till now I was naive, I understood the law in no Turkish fashion, and I thought that the estate devolved from my sister to Sonya.

SEREBRYAKOV : Yes, the estate belongs to Sonya. Who disputes it ? Without Sonya's consent I shan't undertake to sell it. Besides, I'm doing it for Sonya's benefit.

VOYNITSKY : Inconceivable, inconceivable ! Either I've gone out of my mind, or . . . or. . . .

MARIE VASSILIEVNA : George, don't contradict the professor ! He knows better than we do, what's right and what's wrong.

VOYNITSKY : Give me some water . . . (*drinking*). Go on with it ! Go on !

SEREBRYAKOV : I can't understand why you are so agitated, George ! I don't say that my plan is ideal. If all of you find it unsound, I shan't insist.

(*Enter Dyadin, wearing a frock-coat, white gloves and a broad-brimmed top hat.*)

XI.

The Same *and* DYADIN.

DYADIN : I have the honour to salute you. I apologise for venturing to enter without being announced. I am guilty, but I claim your indulgence, as there was not a single domestic in the hall.

SEREBRYAKOV (*perplexed*) : Glad to see you. . . . Come in. . . .

DYADIN (*bowing ceremoniously*) : Your Excellency ! Mesdames ! My intrusion on your domains has a double object. I've come, firstly, to pay a visit and to testify to my reverential respect, secondly, to invite you all to take advantage of this beautiful weather to make an expedition to my province. I dwell at the water mill, which I rent from our common friend the Wood Demon. It is a cosy, poetical corner of the earth, where in the night you can hear mermaids splashing, and in daytime. . . .

VOYNITSKY : Wait a while, Waffle, we are talking business. . . . Wait a while . , . (*to Serebryakov*). Now ask him. . . . The estate was bought from his uncle.

SEREBRYAKOV : Oh, why should I ask him ? What for ?

VOYNITSKY : The estate was then bought for ninety-five thousand roubles. My father paid down only seventy thousand, with a debt on the estate of twenty-five thousand. Now listen. . . . The estate could not have been bought had not I renounced my share of the inheritance in favour of my sister, whom I loved. Moreover I worked for ten years like an ox, and cleared off the whole debt.

SEREBRYAKOV : What do you wish then, my dear man ?

VOYNITSKY : The estate is clear of debt and is in good order,

thanks only to my personal exertions. And now when I'm getting old, you want to bundle me out neck and crop !

SEREBRYAKOV : I can't understand what you're driving at !

VOYNITSKY : For twenty-five years I have managed this estate, I have worked, and have sent you money regularly, like a most conscientious bailiff, and all those years you have never once even thanked me ! All those years, when I was young, and even now, I have received from you an annual wage of five hundred roubles—a beggarly wage !—and it has never once occurred to you to increase it even by one rouble !

SEREBRYAKOV : George, how could I know ? I'm not a practical man and understand nothing in such matters. You could have increased it as much as you liked !

VOYNITSKY : Why didn't I steal, is that it ? Why don't you all despise me because I did not steal ? That would be just, and now I should not be a pauper.

MARIE VASSILIEVNA (*sternly*) : George !

DYADIN (*in agitation*) : George, dear, don't . . . don't . . . I am trembling. . . Why spoil friendly relations ? (*kissing him.*) Please don't. . . .

VOYNITSKY : For twenty-five years, like a mole, I have sat with her, with mother here, within these four walls. . . . All our thoughts and feelings have belonged to you alone. In day-time we spoke of you, of your works, we were proud of your fame, uttered your name with reverence ; and the nights we spent in reading reviews and books, which I now profoundly despise !

DYADIN : Don't, Georgie dear, don't. . . . Please. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV : I don't understand what you want !

VOYNITSKY : You were to us a being of a higher order, and your articles we knew by heart. . . . But now my eyes are opened. I see everything ! You write on art, but understand nothing about art ! All your works which I loved, aren't worth a brass farthing !

SEREBRYAKOV : Gentlemen ! Why don't you restrain him ? I'll leave the room !

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : George, I demand that you keep silent ! Do you hear ?

VOYNITSKY : I shall not keep silent ! (*barring Serebryakov's way*). Wait, I've not finished yet ! You have ruined my life ! I have not lived ! I have not lived ! Thanks to you I wasted, ruined the best years of my life ! You're my worst enemy !

DYADIN : I can't bear it. . . . I can't. . . . I'll go into another room. . . . (*Going out in violent agitation by the door on the right.*)

SEREBRYAKOV : What do you want from me ? And what right have you to talk to me in this tone ? You nonentity ! If the estate is yours, take it, I don't want it !

ZHELTOUKHIN (*aside*) : Now, the fat's in the fire ! . . . I'll go ! (*going out.*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : If you say any more, I shall leave this hell this very minute ! (*crying out.*) I can't bear it any longer !

VOYNITSKY : A life wasted ! I have talent, I'm intelligent, courageous. . . . If I had lived normally I might have been a Schopenhauer, a Dostoevsky . . . My mind's wandering ! I am going mad. . . . Mother, I am in despair ! Mother !

MARIE VASSILIEVNA : Obey the professor !

VOYNTISKY : Mother ! What shall I do ? Oh, don't say a word ! I know myself what I must do ! (*to Serebryakov.*) You shall remember me ! (*going out by the middle door.*)

(MARIE VASSILIEVNA *following after him.*)

SEREBRYAKOV : Gentlemen ! What does all this signify ? Rid me of that lunatic.

ORLOVSKY : He'll be all right, all right, Alexander ; let his spirit calm down. Don't upset yourself so much.

SEREBRYAKOV : I won't live under the same roof with him ! He lives here (*pointing to the middle door*), almost beside me. . . . Let him go and live in the village, or in one of the wings ; otherwise I shall go away from here. Remain with him I will not. . . .

ELENA ANDREYVENA (*to her husband*) : If anything like this happens again, I shall leave the house !

SEREBRYAKOV : Oh, don't frighten me, please !

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : I'm not frightening you, but all of you seem to have agreed to turn my life into hell. . . . I'll leave the house ! . . .

SEREBRYAKOV : Everyone knows quite well that you are young, and I am old, and that you're conferring a great favour by living here. . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Go on. . . . Go on. . . .

ORLOVSKY : Why, why, why. . . . My dear friends. . . .

(*Enter Khrouschov hurriedly.*)

XII.

*The same* and KRHOUSCHOV.

KHROUSCHOV (*in agitaion*) : I'm very glad to find you in, Alexander Vladimirovich. . . Excuse me for coming unseasonably and for being in your way. . . . But this isn't the point. How do you do !

SEREBRYAKOV : What is it you want ?

KHROUSCHOV : Excuse me, I'm agitated . . . it's because I rode so quickly. . . Alexander Vladimirovich, I hear that you have just sold your wood to Kirpichov for timber. If it is true, not mere gossip, then I beg you, don't do it.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Mikhail Lvovich, my husband isn't in the mood now to talk business. Won't you come with me into the garden ?

KHROUSCHOV : But I must speak at once !

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : As you please. . . I can do no more. . . . (*going out*).

KHROUSCHOV : Permit me to drive over to Kirpichov and tell

him that you've changed your mind. . . Yes ? Will you allow me ? To fell a thousand trees, to destroy them for the sake of two or three thousand roubles, for women's rags, whims, luxury. . . . To destroy them so that posterity should curse our savagery ! If you, a scholar, a famous man, dare perpetrate such a cruelty, what may not others do who stand so much below you ! How very terrible !

ORLOVSKY : Misha, talk about it later !

SEREBRYAKOV : Come, let's go, Ivan Ivanych, this will never end.

KHROUSCHOV (*barring Serebryakov's way*) : In that case, look here, professor. . . In three months' time I shall have the money and buy it myself.

ORLOVSKY : Excuse me, Misha, this is rather strange. . . Why, you, let us say, are a man of ideas . . . we thank you most humbly for it, we bow to you to the ground (*bowing*), but why such a rumpus !

KHROUSCHOV (*flaring up*) : Universal dear godpa ! There are too many good-natured men on earth and this always seemed suspicious to me ! They're good-natured because they're indifferent !

ORLOVSKY : Why, you've come here to quarrel, my boy. It is not right ! An idea is an idea, but, look here, old chap, this thing too is needed . . . (*pointing to the heart*). Without that thing, good fellow, all your forests and peats are not worth a brass farthing. . . . Don't take offence, but you're still green, ough ! how very green !

SEREBRYAKOV (*sharply*) : Next time, please don't trouble to come in unannounced, and please deliver me from your psychopathical pranks ! You were all bent on trying my patience, and you've succeeded. . . Please leave me alone ! All these forests of yours, peats of yours, I consider mere delirium and psychopathy—there you have my opinion ! Come, Ivan Ivanych ! (*going out.*)

ORLOVSKY (*following after him*) : Alexander my boy, that's too much. . . Why be so harsh ? (*going out.*)

KHROUSCHOV (*alone, after a pause*) : Delirium, psychopathy. . . According to the famous scholar and professor I am mad. . . . I bow to the authority of your Excellency and I'm going home immediately to shave my head. . . . No ! It is the earth, that still endures you, which is mad ! (*Going hurriedly towards the right door ; Sonya, who has stood listening outside all through the last scene, coming in by the left door.*)

XIII.

KHROUSCHOV *and* SONYA.

SONYA (*running after him*) : Stop. . . I heard everything. . . . Speak. . . . Speak quickly . . . for I shan't bear it any longer and shall start speaking myself !

KHROUSCHOV : Sophie Alexandrovna, I have already said all I wanted to say. I implored your father to spare the wood. I was right, but he insulted me, and called me a madman. . . . I mad !

SONYA: Please, please. . . .

KHROUSCHOV: No, mad are not those, who beneath their learning hide their cruel, stony heart, and pass off their soullessness for profound wisdom! Mad are not those who marry old men in order to deceive them openly, in order to obtain fashionable, elegant dresses on the money got from the felling of forests!

SONYA: Listen to me, listen. . . . (*grasping his hands.*) Let me say. . . .

KHROUSCHOV: Let us finish it. Let there be an end. I am a stranger to you, I know already your opinion of yourself, and I've nothing more to do here. Goodbye. I am sorry that after our close friendship, which was so dear to me, I shall only retain the memory of your father's gout and of your arguments about my democratic sentiments. . . But it is not I who am to blame for it. . . No. . . .

SONYA (*crying, covering her face, and hurriedly walking out by the left door.*)

KHROUSCHOV: I had the imprudence to fall in love here, it shall be a lesson to me! Out of this dungeon! (*Going to the right door; Elena Andreyevna coming in by the left door.*)

XIV.

KHROUSCHOV *and* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA: You are here? One moment. . . . Ivan Ivanych has just told me that my husband was harsh with you. . . . . You must forgive him, he's cross to-day and did not understand you. . . . As for myself, my soul is with you, Mikhail Lvovich! Believe in the sincerity of my respect, I sympathise with you, I am moved; and allow me with a pure heart to offer you my friendship! (*holding out both hands.*)

KHROUSCHOV (*with aversion*): Get away from me. . . . I despise your friendship! (*going out.*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*alone, groaning*): Why, why?

(*A shot is heard behind the scene.*)

XV.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA, MARIE VASSILIEVNA, *and then* SONYA, SEREBRYAKOV, ORLOVSKY *and* ZHELTOUKHIN.

(*Marie Vassilievna comes out by the middle door, staggers, cries out and falls unconscious to the ground.*)

(*Sonya comes in and runs to the middle door.*)

SEREBRYAKOV, ORLOVSKY, ZHELTOUKHIN } What's the matter?

(*Sonya is heard crying out; she returns and cries:—"Uncle George has shot himself!" She, Orlovsky, Serebryakov and Zheltoukhin run out through the middle door.*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*groaning*): Why? Why?

(*Dyadin appears at the door on the right.*)

XVI.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA, MARIE VASSILIEVNA *and* DYADIN.

DYADIN (*in the doorway*) : What's the matter ?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*to him*) : Take me away from here ! Throw me into a deep pit, kill me, but I can't remain here any longer ! Quick, I implore you !

(*Goes out with Dyadin.*)

*Curtain.*

ACT IV.

*The forest and the house by the mill which Dyadin rents from Khrouschov.*

I.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA *and* DYADIN (*sitting on a bench under the window.*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Ilya Ilyich, dear, to-morrow you'll drive over again to the post office.

DYADIN : Most certainly.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : I shall wait another three days. If I get no answer to my letter from my brother, I'll borrow some money from you and go to Moscow. I can't stay for ever at your mill.

DYADIN : Just so. . . . (*a pause.*) I dare not give you advice, my deeply respected lady, but all your letters, telegrams, and my daily journeys to the post office—all these, pardon me, are labours lost. Whatever answer your brother may send you, all the same you will go back to your husband.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : I shan't go back. . . . One must be logical, Ilya Ilyich. I do not love my husband. The young people, of whom I was fond, were unjust to me all along. Why should I go back there ? You will say—duty . . . I too know this perfectly well, but, I say again, one must be logical. . . . (*a pause.*)

DYADIN : Yes ! . . . The greatest Russian poet Lomonosov ran away from the Archangel province to find his fortune in Moscow. This was certainly noble of him. . . . But why did *you* run away ? Your happiness, if we fairly consider the matter, is nowhere to be found. . . . It was appointed that the canary should sit in its cage and look on at the happiness of others ; well, it must sit there all its life long.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Perhaps I'm not a canary, but a free sparrow !

DYADIN : Oh-oh ! A bird is judged by its flight, my deeply respected lady. . . . During these last two weeks any other lady would have managed to be in ten towns, and would have thrown dust in everybody's eyes ; but you have only ventured to run as far as the mill, and even this has worn your soul out. . . . No, no ! You'll stay here a short time longer, your heart will get appeased,

and you'll return to your husband. (*Listening.*) Some one's coming in a carriage. (*Getting up.*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : I'll go in.

DYADIN : I dare not trouble you any more with my presence. . . . I'll go to the mill to have a little nap. . . . I rose this morning before Aurora.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : After you've had your nap, come and we'll have tea together (*going into the house*).

DYADIN (*alone*) : If I lived in an intellectual centre, they could draw a caricature of me for a magazine, with a very funny satirical inscription. Gracious ! I, at my time of life and with an unattractive appearance, to have carried off a famous professor's young wife ! That is fascinating ! (*going away.*)

II.

SEMYON (*carrying buckets*) *and* JULIE (*coming in*).

JULIE : Good-day, Semyon. God assist you ! Is Ilya Ilyich at home ?

SEMYON : Yes. He's gone to the mill.

JULIE : Will you go and call him.

SEMYON : Yes. (*Going away.*)

JULIE (*alone*) : He must be asleep . . . (*sitting down on the bench under the window and sighing deeply*). Some sleep, others lounge about, and I all day long am running about, running about . . . God won't end my life (*with a still deeper sigh*). Good God, that there can be such foolish people, as that Waffle ! As I drove by his barn a black little pig came out of the door. . . . It'll serve him right if the pigs tear the sacks which aren't his. . . .

(*Enter Dyadin.*)

III.

JULIE *and* DYADIN.

DYADIN (*putting on his coat*) : It is you, Yulia Stepanovna ? Excuse my déshabillé . . . I wanted to rest awhile in the embraces of Morpheus.

JULIE : How do you do !

DYADIN : Excuse me for not asking you in. . . . The rooms aren't tidied, etc. Perhaps you will come with me to the mill ? . . .

JULIE : I shall be all right here. This is what I've come for, Ilya Ilyich. Lennie and the professor, to amuse themselves, wish to have a picnic here at the mill, to have tea. . . .

DYADIN : I'm delighted.

JULIE : I came in advance. . . . They'll be here presently. Please order a table to be brought out here, and of course the samovar. . . . Tell Semyon to get the provision baskets out of the carriage.

DYADIN : Certainly (*a pause*). Well ? How are you all getting on ?

JULIE : Badly, Ilya Ilyich. . . . Do you believe me, the whole

bother has made me ill. You know, the professor and Sonechka are living with us now!

DYADIN: Yes, I know.

JULIE: After George laid hands on himself, they could not stay in the house. . . . They're afraid. In daytime they don't mind it so much, but when night falls, they all gather in one room and sit there until dawn. They are afraid of George's appearing in the darkness. . . .

DYADIN: Superstitions. . . . And do they mention Elena Andreyevna?

JULIE: Of course they do (*a pause*). Vanished!

DYADIN: Yes, it's a subject worthy of Aivasovsky's brush. . . . Just gone and vanished.

JULIE: And now nobody knows where she is. . . . Perhaps she has run away, or perhaps, in despair. . . .

DYADIN: God is merciful, Yulia Stepanovna! All will be well.

(*Enter Khrouschov with a portfolio and drawing case.*)

IV.

THE SAME *and* KHROUSCHOV.

KHROUSCHOV: Hi! Is there anybody here? Semyon!

DYADIN: Have a look round.

KHROUSCHOV: Oh! . . . How do you do, Julie!

JULIE: How do you do, Mikhail Lvovich!

KHROUSCHOV: I've come again to you, Ilya Ilyich, to work here. I can't sit at home. Tell them to place my table under this tree, as they did yesterday, and to have two lamps ready. It'll soon be dark. . . .

DYADIN: At your service, your worship (*going out*).

KHROUSCHOV: How are you getting on, Julie?

JULIE: So so . . . (*a pause*).

KHROUSCHOV: The Serebryakovs are staying with you?

JULIE: Yes.

KHROUSCHOV: Hm. . . . And what's your Lennie doing?

JULIE: He sits at home. . . . All the time with Sonechka. . . .

KHROUSCHOV: Of course! (*a pause*). Why doesn't he marry her?

JULIE: Well? (*a sigh*). God bless him! He's well-educated, a nobleman, she too is of a good family. . . . I have always wished it for her. . . .

KHROUSCHOV: She's a fool. . . .

JULIE: Now, you mustn't say so.

KHROUSCHOV: And your Lennie is a bright one too. All your people are a picked lot. A palace of wisdom!

JULIE: Probably you've had no lunch to-day.

KHROUSCHOV: What makes you think so?

JULIE: You're so very cross.

(*Enter Dyadin and Semyon; both carrying a table.*)

V.

THE SAME, DYADIN *and* SEMYON.

DYADIN : You've an eye, Misha, for the right place. You've chosen an exquisite spot to work in. It's an oasis ! A pure oasis ! Imagine that you are surrounded with palm trees, Julie here—a gentle hind, you—a lion, I—a tiger. . . .

KHROUSCHOV : You're a good fellow, a gentle soul, Ilya Ilyich, but your manners ! Treacly words, shuffling feet, squared shoulders. . . . If a stranger were to see you, he'd think that you aren't a man, but the devil knows what. . . It is annoying. . . .

Dyadin : I think this must be my destiny. . . . Fatal predestination.

KHROUSCHOV : At it again . . . fatal predestination ! Stop it all (*fixing a chart on the table*). I'm going to stay the night with you here.

DYADIN : I'm extremely glad. . . . Now, Misha, you are cross, while in my soul there's inexpressible joy ! As though a bird was sitting in my heart and singing a song.

KHROUSCHOV : Rejoice then (*a pause*). There's a bird in your heart, but there's a frog in mine. Twenty thousand scandals ! Shimansky has sold his forest for timber. That's one ! Elena Andreyevna has run away from her husband, and nobody knows now where she is. That's two ! I feel that every day I'm getting more foolish, petty and stupid. . . . That's three ! Yesterday I meant to tell you, but I lacked the courage. You may congratulate me. George left a diary. That diary got first into Orlovsky's hands ; I went over and have read it a dozen times. . . .

JULIE : Our people have also read it.

KHROUSCHOV : George's affair with Elena Andreyevna, with which the whole district rang, turns out to be an abominable, dirty slander. . . . I believed that slander and slandered along with the rest ; I hated, despised, insulted. . . .

DYADIN : That's certainly wrong.

KHROUSCHOV : The first person whose word I took was your brother, Julie dear. Yes, I too am a fine fellow ! I believed your brother, whom I don't respect ; and disbelieved the woman, who before my very eyes was sacrificing herself. I more readily believe evil than good, and see no further than my nose. And this means that I am as stupid as the rest.

DYADIN (*to Julie*) : Come, let's go to the mill, my dear. Let the cross baby work here, and we will go for a walk. . . . Work away, Misha, old chap ! (*Going out with Julie.*)

KHROUSCHOV (*alone ; mixing the colours in a saucer*) : One night I saw him leaning his face against her hand. In his diary, that night is described in full ; he tells how I came there, what I said to him. He quotes my words and calls me a fool and narrow-minded (*a pause*). . . It's too thick. . . . It should be thinner. . . . And then he blames Sonya for having fallen in love with me. . . . She never

loved me. . . . Now, there's a blot . . . (*rubbing the paper with a knife*). If, even, I admit that there's some truth in it, yet I must not think of it. . . . It began foolishly, and ended foolishly. . . . (*Semyon and the labourers bringing in a large table.*) What's it? What's it for?

SEMYON: Ilya Ilyich told us to bring it in. Company is coming from the Zheltoukhin estate to have tea here.

KHROUSCHOV: All right. No work for me now. . . . I'll pack up my things and go home.

(*Enter Zheltoukhin with Sonya on his arm.*)

VI.

KHROUSCHOV, ZHELTOUKHIN *and* SONYA.

ZHELTOUKHIN (*singing*): "Unwillingly to these shores am I drawn by an unknown power." . . .

KHROUSCHOV: Who's there? Eh? (*hastily packing his case of instruments*).

ZHELTOUKHIN: One more question, dear Sophie. . . Do you remember, that day you lunched at our house, my birthday? Do own that you laughed then at my appearance.

SONYA: Leonid Stepanych, how can you say such a thing? I laughed for no reason.

ZHELTOUKHIN: (*having noticed Khrouschov*) Oh, you too are here? How do you do!

KHROUSCHOV: How do you do!

ZHELTOUKHIN: You're working away? Splendid. . . Where's Waffle?

KHROUSCHOV: There. . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN: Where's there?

KHROUSCHOV: I think I speak quite clearly. . . . There, at the mill.

ZHELTOUKHIN: I'd better ask him to come here (*walking away and whistling*). "Unwillingly to these shores . . ." (*going out.*)

SONYA: How do you do? . . .

KHROUSCHOV: How do you do?

SONYA: What are you drawing?

KHROUSCHOV: Oh . . . nothing interesting.

SONYA: Is it a plan?

KHROUSCHOV: No, it's a map showing the forests of our district. I've mapped them out (*after a pause*). The green colour indicates the places where there were forests during the time of our grandfathers and before them; the bright green—where forests have been cut down during the last twenty-five years; and the blue—where there are forests still left intact. . . . Yes . . . (*a pause*). Well, and how are you? Are you happy?

SONYA: This is not the time, Mikhail Lvovich, to think of happiness.

KHROUSCHOV: What else is there to think of?

SONYA : Our sorrow came only because we thought too much of happiness. . . .

KHROUSCHOV : So. (*After a pause.*)

SONYA : There's no evil without some good in it. Sorrow has taught me this, that one must forget about one's own happiness and think only of the happiness of others. One's whole life should consist of sacrifices. . . .

KHROUSCHOV : Yes . . . (*after a pause*). Marie Vassilievna's son shot himself, and she goes on searching for contradictions in her little books. A great misfortune befell yourself, and you're pampering your self-love : you are trying to distort your life and you think this a sacrifice. . . . No one has a heart. . . . Neither you nor I. . . . Quite the wrong things are being done, and everything goes to waste. . . . I'll go away presently and won't be in your and Zheltoukhin's way. . . . Why are you crying ? I did not at all mean to make you cry.

SONYA : Never mind, never mind . . . (*wiping away her tears*).

(*Enter Julie, Dyadin and Zheltoukhin.*)

VII.

THE SAME, JULIE, DYADIN, ZHELTOUKHIN and *then* SEREBRYAKOV and ORLOVSKY.

SEREBRYAKOV'S voice : Hu-llo ! Where are you all ?

SONYA (*crying out*) : We're here, papa !

DYADIN : They're bringing the samovar ! That is fascinating ! (*he and Julie arranging things on the table*).

(*Enter Serebryakov and Orlovsky.*)

SONYA : Here, papa !

SEREBRYAKOV : I see, I see. . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN (*aloud*) : Gentlemen, I declare the sitting open ! Waffle, uncork the liqueur.

KHROUSCHOV (*to Serebryakov*) : Professor, let us forget what has occurred between us ! (*holding out his hand*). I beg you to forgive me. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV : I thank you. I am very glad. You too must forgive me. When the next day after that incident I tried to think over all that had taken place and recalled our conversation, I felt very upset. . . . Let us be friends (*taking his arm and going to the table*).

ORLOVSKY : You should have done this long ago, dear soul. A bad peace is better than a good quarrel.

DYADIN : Your Excellency, I am delighted that it pleased you to honour my oasis. Inexpressibly delighted !

SEREBRYAKOV : Thank you, my dear Sir. Indeed it is a fine place. A real oasis.

ORLOVSKY : And do you, Alexander, love nature ?

SEREBRYAKOV : Very much (*a pause*). Gentlemen, let us not keep silent, let us talk. In our position that is the best thing to do. One must look misfortune straight and boldly in the face

I am more cheerful than all of you, and for this reason, that I am the most unhappy.

JULIE : I shan't add any sugar ; have your tea with jam.

DYADIN (*bustling about among the company*) : How glad, how very glad I am !

SEREBRYAKOV : Latterly, Mikhail Lvovich, I have gone through such a great deal and thought over things so much, that I believe I could write a treatise, for the edification of posterity, on how to live. Live an age and learn an age, but it is misfortunes that teach us.

DYADIN : He who remembers the evil past, should lose an eye. God is merciful ; all will end well.

SONYA (*starting*).

ZHELTOUKHIN : What made you start ?

SONYA : I heard a cry.

DYADIN : It's the peasants on the river catching crayfish (*pause*).

ZHELTOUKHIN : Didn't we agree to spend the evening as if nothing had happened ? . . . And yet . . . there's some kind of tension. . . .

DYADIN : Your Excellency, I cherish towards science feelings not only of reverence, but even of blood relationship. My brother's wife's brother, you may perhaps have heard his name—Konstantin Gavrilych Novossyolov—was a Master of Foreign Literature.

SEREBRYAKOV : I didn't know him personally, but I know the name (*a pause*).

JULIE : To-morrow it will be exactly fifteen days since George died.

KHROUSCHOV : Julie dear, don't let us talk about it.

SEREBRYAKOV : Courage ! Courage ! (*a pause*).

ZHELTOUKHIN : There is still some kind of tension. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV : Nature abhors a vacuum. She has deprived me of two intimate relations and, in order to fill up the gap, she has soon given me new friends. I drink your health, Leonid Stepanovich !

ZHELTOUKHIN : I thank you, dear Alexander Vladimirovich ! Allow me in my turn to drink to your fruitful scientific activity.

" Sow the seeds of wisdom, of goodness, of eternity !

" Sow the seeds ! The Russian folk will give you their hearty gratitude ! "

SEREBRYAKOV : I value the compliment you pay me. I wish from my heart that the time may soon come when our friendly relations shall have grown into more intimate ones.

(*Enter Fyodor.*)

## VIII.

THE SAME *and* FYODOR.

FYODOR : That's where you are ! A picnic !

ORLOVSKY : My sonnie . . . my beauty !

FYODOR : How do you do ! (*embracing Sonya and Julie*).

ORLOVSKY : I've not seen you for a fortnight. Where have you been ? What have you seen ?

FYODOR : I just drove over to Lennie's ; there I was told that you were here ; and I came here.

ORLOVSKY : Where have you been wandering ?

FYODOR : Three nights without sleep. . . Yesterday, dad, I lost five thousand at cards. I drank, played cards, went to town five times. . . . Fairly crazy.

ORLOVSKY : That's a brave fellow. You must be a little drunk still ?

FYODOR : Not a bit. Julie, tea please ! Only with lemon, as sour as you like. . . . And George, eh ! Without rhyme or reason to put a bullet in his head ! And with a French revolver too ! As if he couldn't have got an honest English one !

KHROUSCHOV : Hold your tongue, you beast !

FYODOR : Beast, but a pedigree one ! (*stroking his beard*). The beard alone, what isn't it worth ! . . . Here I am, a beast, and a fool, and a knave, yet I have only to will—and the finest girl would marry me. Sonya, marry me ! (*To Khrouschov*) Oh, I'm so sorry. . . . Pardon. . . .

KHROUSCHOV : Stop playing the fool.

JULIE : You're a lost soul, Fedenka ! In the whole district there is no such drunkard and spendthrift, as you. The mere sight of you is heartbreaking. You are a caution !

FYODOR : Now, you've started whining ! Come here, sit beside me. . . . That's right. I'll come and stay with you for a fortnight. . . . I must have a rest (*kissing her*).

JULIE : You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You should be a comfort to your father in his old age, but you only disgrace him. Yours is a stupid life and nothing else.

FYODOR : I am giving up drink ! Basta ! (*pouring out some liqueur.*)

JULIE : Don't drink then, don't drink !

FYODOR : One glass I may (*drinking*). Wood Demon, I make you a present of a pair of horses and a gun. I'm going to stay at Julie's. . . . I'll stay there about a fortnight.

KHROUSCHOV : It would do you more good to be sent to a disciplinary battalion.

JULIE : Drink, drink some tea !

DYADIN : Have some rusks, old chap.

ORLOVSKY (*to Serebryakov*) : Up to age of forty, Alexander old boy, I led the same life as my Fyodor here. One day, my dear soul, I began counting how many women I had made unhappy in my life. I counted, counted, arrived at seventy, and gave it up. Well, as soon as I reached the age of forty, suddenly, Alexander old boy, something came over me. Sick at heart ; I could find no peace ; in a word, my soul at odds with itself, and there I was. I tried all sorts of things, I read books, worked, travelled—all of no

avail. Once, my dear soul, I went to pay a visit to my late friend, the Most Serene Prince Dmitri Pavlovich. We sat down to lunch. After lunch, so as not to sleep, we started shooting at a target in the courtyard. There were numbers and numbers of people present. And our Waffle was there too.

DYADIN : I was there, yes . . . I remember. . . .

ORLOVSKY : Lord, my anguish then ! . . . I could endure it no longer. Suddenly tears gushed from my eyes, I staggered, and suddenly cried out at the top of my voice across the whole yard with all my power : " My friends, my good people, forgive me, for the love of Christ ! " And that very moment I felt my heart to have become pure, gentle, warm ; and since that time, my dear soul, there is no happier man than I in the whole district. You too ought to do the same.

SEREBRYAKOV : What !

(*A glow appears in the sky.*)

ORLOVSKY : To do just as I did. To capitulate. To surrender.

SEREBYRAKOV : That's an example of our native philosophy. You advise me to ask forgiveness. For what ? Let others ask forgiveness of me !

SONYA : Papa, but it is *we* who are to blame !

SEREBRYAKOV : Yes ? Gentlemen, evidently at the present moment you all have in view my attitude towards my wife. Am I, in your opinion, am I to blame ? It is ridiculous even. She has violated her duty, she left me at a difficult moment in life. . . .

KHROUSCHOV : Alexander Vladimirovich, please listen to me. . . . For twenty-five years you have been a professor and served science ; I plant forests and practise medicine—but for what purpose and for whom is it all, if we do not spare those for whom we are working ? We say that we are serving humanity, and at the same time we are inhumanly destroying one another. For instance, did you or I do anything to save George ? Where's your wife, whom everyone of us insulted ? Where's your peace, where's your daughter's peace ? All is ruined, destroyed, all is going to waste. All of you call me Wood Demon, but not in me alone, in all of you sits a demon, all of you wander in a dark forest and grope your way. Of understanding, knowledge and heart we have just enough to spoil our own and other people's lives. . . .

(*Elena Andreyevna comes out of the house and sits down on the bench under the window.*)

## IX.

THE SAME *and* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.

KHROUSCHOV : I considered myself a man of ideas, a humane man, and at the same time I did not forgive people their slightest mistakes. I believed slanders, I gossiped along with others ; and when, for instance, your wife trustfully offered me her friendship, I fired off at her from the height of my loftiness : " Get away from me ! I despise your friendship ! " That's what I am like. There

sits a demon in me, I am petty, without talent, blind ; but you, professor, too, are no eagle ! And yet the whole district, all the women see in me a hero, an advanced man, and you are famous all over Russia. And if such as I are seriously taken as heroes, and if such as you are seriously famous, it means only that for lack of better men Jack is a nobleman, that there are no real heroes, no talents, no men who might lead us out of this dark forest, who might repair what we are spoiling ; that there are no real eagles who might by right enjoy honourable fame. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV : Sorry . . . I came here not in order to carry on a polemic with you and to defend my title to fame. . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN : Now, Misha, let's stop this talk.

KHROUSCHOV : I'll finish presently and leave you. Yes, I am petty, but, professor, you too are no eagle. Petty was George who could not devise anything cleverer than to put a bullet in his head. All are petty ! And as to the women. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*interrupting*) : As to the women, neither are they any bigger (*advancing towards the table*). Elena Andreyevna left her husband, and do you think she will turn her freedom to any good use ? Don't worry. . . . She will come back . . . (*sitting down at the table*). She has already come back. . . .

(*General consternation.*)

DYADIN (*laughing aloud*) : That is fascinating ! Suspend sentence, gentlemen, and let me say a word. Your Excellency, it is I who carried off your wife, as once upon a time a certain Paris carried off the Fair Helen. I ! Although there are no pock-marked Parises, yet there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy !

KHROUSCHOV : I can't make it out. . . . It is you, Elena Andreyevna ?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : The last fortnight I've stayed here with Ilya Ilyich. . . . Why do you all look at me so ? Well, how do you do ! . . . I sat by the window and heard everything (*embracing Sonya*). Let's be friends ! How are you, my dear girl. . . . Peace and goodwill !

DYADIN (*rubbing his hands*) : That is fascinating !

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*to Khrouschov*) : Mikhail Lvovich (*holding out her hand*). He who remembers the evil past, should lose an eye. How do you do, Fyodor Ivanych. . . . Julie dear. . . .

ORLOVSKY : Darling, our glorious Mrs. Professor, our beauty . . . she has come back, she has returned again to us. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : I missed you all so much. How do you do, Alexander ! (*holding out her hand to her husband ; the latter turning his face away*). Alexander !

SEREBRYAKOV : You have violated your duty.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : Alexander !

SEREBRYAKOV : I shan't deny I am very glad to see you and am

ready to talk to you, but not here, at home . . . (*moving away from the table*).

ORLOVSKY : Alexander ! (*a pause*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : So. . . . It means, Alexander, our problem is solved quite plainly : in no way at all. Well, so it must be ! I am an episodic character, mine is a canary's happiness, a woman's happiness. . . . To stick all my life long at home, to eat, to drink, to sleep, and to hear every day talk of your gout, of your rights, of your merits. . . . Why have you all dropped your heads, as if ashamed ? Let's drink the liqueur, let us. Come ?

DYADIN : Everything will turn out well, and get better, everything will be right and safe.

FYODOR (*coming up to Serebryakov, in agitation*) : Alexander Vladimirovich, I am touched. . . I pray you, be kind to her, show your wife some tenderness, say one kind word to her, and on the word of an honourable man, all my life long I will be your true friend, I'll make you a present of my best troika.

SEREBRYAKOV : Thank you, but excuse me, I don't understand you. . . .

FYODOR : Hm . . . you don't understand. . . . Once I was coming back from the hunt, and saw a tawny owl sitting on a tree. . . . I bang a pellet at him ! He sits. . . . I bang at him a number nine . . . he sits. . . . Nothing moves him. He sits and only flaps his eyes.

SEREBRYAKOV : What does this refer to ?

FYODOR : To the tawny owl (*returning to the table*).

ORLOVSKY (*listening*) : I say, friends . . . quiet . . . I think the church bells are ringing a fire alarm somewhere.

FYODOR (*noticing the glow*) : O-o-oh ! Look at the sky ! What a glow !

ORLOVSKY : Dear souls, and we're sitting here and missing it all.

DYADIN : Grand !

FYODOR : O-oh ! What an illumination ! It must be near Alexeyevsk.

KHROUSCHOV : No, Alexeyevsk is more to the right. . . . It must be Novo-Petrovsk.

JULIE : How terrible ! I'm afraid of a fire.

KHROUSCHOV : It's Novo-Petrovsk for certain.

DYADIN (*shouting*) : Semyon, run to the dyke and have a look where the fire is. You might see it from there !

SEMYON (*shouting*) : It is the Telibeyev forest burning.

DYADIN : What ?

SEMYON : The Telibeyev forest !

DYADIN : Forest . . . (*a long pause*).

KHROUSCHOV : I must go there . . . to the fire. . . . Goodbye. . . . Forgive me, I was harsh, it is because I never felt so depressed as to-day. My soul is in anguish. . . . But all this is no matter. . . . One must be a man and stand firmly on one's feet. I shall not

shoot myself, nor throw myself under the wheels of the mill. . . . I may not be a hero, but I will become one ! I will grow the wings of an eagle, and neither this glow nor the devil himself shall frighten me ! Let forests burn—I will plant new ones ! Let me not be loved by one, I will love another ! (*rushing off*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : What a splendid man !

ORLOVSKY : Yes. . . . " Let me not be loved by one, I will love another." How is this to be understood ?

SONYA : Take me away from here . . . I want to go home. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV : Yes, it's time to go. It's dreadfully damp here. My rug and overcoat are somewhere about. . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN : The rug is in the carriage, and here's the overcoat (*handing it to him*).

SONYA (*in violent agitation*) : Take me away from here. . . . Take me away. . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN : At your service. . . .

SONYA : No, I will go with godpa. Take me with you, godpa. . . .

ORLOVSKY : Certainly, my dear soul, come with me (*handing her her things*).

ZHELTOUKHIN (*aside*) : Curse it. . . . Nothing but humiliation and meanness.

(*Fyodor and Julie pack the tea things and serviettes into the basket.*)

SEREBRYAKOV : The heel of my left foot is aching. . . . It must be rheumatism. . . . Again I shan't sleep all night.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*buttoning up her husband's coat*) : Ilya Ilyich dear, please fetch my hat and cloak from the house !

DYADIN : I will ! (*going into the house and coming back with her hat and cloak*).

ORLOVSKY : You are frightened of the glow, my dear ! Don't be afraid, it's growing smaller. The fire is being put out. . . .

JULIE : There's half a jar of medlar jam left. . . . Well, let Ilya Ilyich have it . . . (*to her brother*) Lennie dear, take the basket.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA : I'm ready . . . (*to her husband*). Well, take me, you statue of the commander, and go to blazes with me in your twenty-six dismal rooms ! That's all I'm good for !

SEREBRYAKOV : Statue of the commander. . . . I should laugh at this simile, but the pain in my foot prevents me . . . (*to the whole company*). Good-bye, friends ! I thank you for the entertainment and for your pleasant company. . . . A superb evening, splendid tea—everything perfect, but, excuse me, there's one thing I can't approve of here—your native philosophy and views on life. One must work, gentlemen ! Your way is impossible ! One must do things. . . . Yes, one must work. . . . Goodbye (*walking off with his wife*).

FYODOR : Come, Julie ! (*to his father*). Good-bye, pater (*walking off with Julie*).

ZHELTOUKHIN (*with the basket, following them*) : A heavy basket, damn it . . . I can't stand these picnics . . . (*Shouting behind the scene to his coachman*). Alexey, drive up !

X.

ORLOVSKY, SONYA *and* DYADIN.

ORLOVSKY (*to Sonya*) : Well, why are you sitting down ? Come, my duckie . . . (*going out with Sonya*).

DYADIN (*aside*) : No one said good-bye to me. . . . That is fascinating ! (*putting out the candles*).

ORLOVSKY (*to Sonya*) : What's the matter ?

SONYA : I can't go away, dear godpa. . . . I can't ! I'm in despair, godpa. . . . I'm in despair ! It's so unbearably difficult !

ORLOVSKY (*alarmed*) : What's wrong ? My duckie, my beauty. . . .

SONYA : Let's remain here. . . . Let's stay here a little while.

ORLOVSKY : One moment it's take me away, the other moment let's stay. . . . I can't make you out. . . .

SONYA : Here to-day I have lost my happiness. . . . It's unbearable ! . . . Oh, godpa dear, why am I still alive ? (*embracing him*). Oh, if you knew, if you knew !

ORLOVSKY : I'll give you some water. . . . Let's sit down. . . . come.

DYADIN : What's wrong ? Sophie Alexandrovna, dear . . . you mustn't, I am all in a tremble . . . (*tearfully*). I can't bear to see it. . . . My dear child. . . .

SONYA : Ilya Ilyich dear, drive me over to the fire ! I implore you !

ORLOVSKY : What do you want with the fire ? What will you do there ?

SONYA : I implore you, drive me over to the fire, or I'll walk there. I'm in despair. . . . Godpa, it's hard, unbearably hard ! Drive me over to the fire.

(*Enter Khrouschov hurriedly.*)

XI.

THE SAME *and* KHROUSCHOV.

KHROUSCHOV (*shouting*) : Ilya Ilyich !

DYADIN : Here ! What is it you want ?

KHROUSCHOV : I can't walk, let me have your horse.

SONYA (*recognising Khrouschov, and crying out joyfully*) : Mikhail Lvovich ! (*going towards him*) Mikhail Lvovich ! (*to Orlovsky*) Go away, godpa dear, I have something to say to him. (*To Khrouschov*). Mikhail Lvovich, you said that you would love another. . . (*to Orlovsky*). Go away, godpa ! . . . (*to Khrouschov*) I am another now . . . I only want the truth. . . . Nothing, nothing but the truth ! I love you, I love you, I love. . . .

ORLOVSKY : Now ,I see ! (*laughing*).

DYADIN : That is fascinating !

SONYA (*to Orlovsky*) : Go away, godpa dear (*to Khrouschov*).

Yes, yes, only the truth and nothing else. . . . Speak then, speak. . . . I've said everything. . . .

KHROUSCHOV (*embracing her*) : My darling !

SONYA : Don't go, godpa dear. . . . When you told me of your love, I panted for joy, but I was fettered by prejudices. I was prevented from giving you a true answer just as father is prevented from smiling on Elena. Now I am free. . . .

ORLOVSKY (*laughing aloud*) : Singing in tune at last ! Scrambled out on to the bank ! I have the honour to congratulate you (*bowing low*). Ah, you naughty, naughty children !

DYADIN (*embracing Khrouschov*) : Misha, my dear boy, how glad you make me ! Misha, dear boy !

ORLOVSKY (*embracing and kissing Sonya*) : My darling, my little canary. . . . My dear little goddaughter. (Sonya *laughing aloud*). Now, you've started !

KHROUSCHOV : I can hardly grasp it all. . . Let me have a word with her. Don't get in our way. . . . Pray, go away. . . .

(*Enter Fyodor and Julie.*)

XII

THE SAME, FYODOR *and* JULIE.

JULIE : But it's all a fib, Fyodor dear ! You're fibbing.

ORLOVSKY : Sh-sh ! Quiet, boys ! My rascal is coming here. Let us hide ourselves, quick ! Do !

(*Orlovsky, Dyadin, Krouschov and Sonya hide themselves.*)

FYODOR : I left my whip and glove here.

JULIE : But it's all a fib !

FYODOR : Well, let it be a fib. . . . What of it ? I don't yet want to go to your house. . . . Let's walk for a while, and then we will go. . . .

JULIE : You are a nuisance ! (*clapping her hands*). Now, isn't that Waffle a silly ! The table is not yet cleared ! Some one might have stolen the samovar. . . . Oh, Waffle, Waffle—an old man, and yet he has less sense than a baby !

DYADIN (*aside*) : Thanks.

JULIE : As we came up I heard someone laughing. . . .

FYODOR : It's the peasant women bathing . . . (*picking up a glove*). There's some one's glove. . . . Sonya's. . . . To-day Sonya behaved as though she were bitten by a fly. She's in love with the Wood Demon. She's in love with him up to her eyes, and he, the blockhead, does not see it.

JULIE (*angrily*) : Where are we going then ?

FYODOR : To the dyke. . . . Let's go for a walk. . . . There's no finer spot in the whole district. . . . A beauty.

ORLOVSKY (*aside*) : My sonnie, my beauty, his fine beard. . . .

JULIE : I just heard a voice.

FYODOR : (*resting*) " Here are wonders, the Wood Demon loiters, the mermaid sits on the branches." . . . Yes, old chap ! (*clapping her on the shoulder*).

JULIE : I'm not a chap.

FYODOR : Let us reason it out peacefully. Listen, Julie dear. I've gone through fire and water. . . . I am already thirty-five, and have no status except that of lieutenant in the Serbian army and Non. Com. in the Russian reserve. I'm dangling between the sky and the earth. . . . I must change my mode of life, and you see . . . do you understand, I've now a fancy in my head that if I were to marry, a huge change will happen in my life. . . . Do marry me, do ! I ask for no one better. . . .

JULIE (*confused*) : Hm. . . . You see . . . you first reform, Fyodor dear.

FYODOR : Well, don't bargain like a gipsy ! Speak straight out !

JULIE : I'm shy . . . (*looking round*). Stop, someone might come in or overhear us. . . I believe Waffle is looking through the window.

FYODOR : There's no one.

JULIE (*falling on his neck*) : Fedenka !

(*Sonya laughs aloud ; Orlovsky, Dyadin and Khrouschov laugh, clap their hands and shout : " Bravo ! Bravo ! "*)

FYODOR : Ugh ! How you frightened us ! Where did you come from ?

SONYA : Julie dear, I congratulate you ! And you may congratulate me . . . (*laughter, kisses, noise*).

DYADIN : That is fascinating ! That is fascinating !

(*Curtain.*)

# Poems

By JOHN CROWE RANSOM.

## Eclogue.

JANE SNEED BEGAN IT: My poor John, alas!
Ten years ago, pretty it was in a ring
To run as boys and girls do in the grass—
At that time, leap and hollo and skip and sing
Came easily to pass.

And precious little innocents were we!
Said a boy, "Now shall we let her be the fox?"
Or a girl, "Now which of you will climb the tree?"
We were quick-foot the deer, strong-heart the ox,
Business-man the bee.

JOHN BLACK SAID: I'll interpret what you mean.
Our infant selves played happily with our others,
The cunning me and mine came not between,
Which like a sword is, O sweethearts and brothers
Numberless, who have seen.

JANE SNEED: I tell you what I used to do:
For joy I used to run by river or wood
To see with what speed all came trooping too;
Those days, I could not quit you if I would!
Nor yet quit me, could you.

JOHN BLACK RETURNED: But now, Jane, it appears,
We are sly travellers, keeping good lookout
Against the face whose ravage cries for tears;
Old friends, ill-met; and supposing I call out,
Draw nigh, friend of these years!—

Before he think of any reason why,
The features of that man resolve and burn
For one long look—but then the flame must die.
The cold hearts in us mortally return,
We may not fructify.

JANE SNEED SAID BITTERLY : Why, John, you are right.
We were spendthrifts of joy when we were young,
But we became usurious, and in fright
Conceived that such a waste of days was wrong
For marchers unto night.

JOHN BLACK SAID : Yes, exactly, that was when
It happened. For Time involved us : in his toils
We learned to fear. And every day since then
We are mortals teasing for immortal spoils,
Desperate women and men.

JANE SNEED CONSENTED : It was nothing but this.
Love suffereth long, is kind—but not in fear.
For boys run banded, and simple sweethearts kiss,
Till, on one day, the face of Death appear,
Then metamorphosis !

JOHN BLACK SAID : To explain mistrust and wars,
Theogony has a black witch with hell's broth ;
Or a preposterous marriage of fleshless stars ;
Or the Fiend's own naked person ; or God wroth
Fingering his red scars.

And Philosophy, an art of equal worth,
Tells of a flaw in the firmament—spots in the sun—
A Third Day's error when the upheaving earth
Was young and prime—a Fate reposed upon
The born, before their birth.

JANE SNEED WITH GRIM LIPS MOCKED HIM : Who
can tell—
Not I, not you—about these mysteries !
Something, John Black, came flapping out of hell
And wrought between us, and the chasm is
Digged—and it digged it well.

JOHN BLACK IN DEPRECATION SAID : Be sure
That love has suffered a most fatal eclipse ;
All brotherhoods, filialities insecure ;

Lovers compounding honey on their lips
With deep doubts to endure.

JANE SNEED SAID SLOWLY: I suppose it stands
Just so. Yet I can picture happiness—
Still wander lovers in the fairy lands
Who, when stalks Night the dark and fathomless,
Consort their little hands.

And well, John Black, those darkened lovers may,
For hands hold much of heat in little storage,
And eyes are flickerless torches good as day;
The flame of each to the other's flame cries Courage!
Soon heart to heart slide they.

Thus unafraid they keep the whole night through,
Till the sun of a sudden glowing through the brushes,
They wake and laugh, their eyes again are blue,
They run to the fields, and apprehend the thrushes,
And print the fairy dew.

JOHN BLACK'S THE LAST SAY THEN: O innocent dove,
This is a dream. We lovers mournfully
Exchange our bleak despairs. We are one part love
And nine parts bitter thought. As well might be
Beneath ground as above.

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## Moments of Minnie.

Let us not honour girls of Minnie's kind,
Whose charms are more endearing than her mind;
Would we deny the moralists we are?

Yet it oppressed me when an evil star
Had thralled so lazy and beautiful a creature
And scared and misshapen a most tender feature.
The mouth-corners were pulled down, and the outleaning
Of her soft lips drew back their gallant meaning.
Pain is hideous, it pinched the vaulted line

To a flatness terrible—yet no doing of mine—
And pain is primitive, it undid words
And left her no more speech than ill-bred birds.
For she uttered and I heard that which could not
Be foreseen, nor yet afterwards forgot :
Oh, Oh, Oh ! Not a word, not a name,
And no tears flowed, yet wry and dry it came
Till I trembled—and I fled—I had to find
Distance for a contagion-catching mind.

Then I washed my mind with its old memories.
For it was better to reconstitute the trees
And the bridegroom scarlet bird of April crying
To his brown one embowered, and the flying
Mirth that bubbled off this woman's mouth
From secret wells abundant as the South
Which spilled their joy too thickly for sharp speech :
Ah, Ah, Ah ! she sighed deeply, and each
Breathing was a new Ah ! until I heard
What never issues on the lettered word.

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## The Miller's Daughter.

I have seen, O, the miller's daughter
And on her neck a coral necklace lies
And yellow glint of corn is in her eyes
Which are a blue stillwater.

The strange miller hath strange daughter
For he is pink and painfully doth walk
And life demandeth of them little talk
Beside the small millwater.

At candlelight I hear she goes
And on a bed of snow like snow she lies
Yet warmer much and lids her sleepy eyes.
Long lies the tall white tower which uprose.

At daylight some vague bird
Tinkles his little bell and she comes down
Coiling her hair as queens would coil a crown.
Yet queens are too absurd.

And so am I, poor bookish hind,
Who come by fabulous roads around the hill
To bring the famous daughter of the mill
No combs to sell, no corn to grind,

But too much pudding in my head
Of learned characters and scraps of love
Which O that she might peck at (dainty dove !)
And words vain to be said.

What then to do but stare—
A learned eye of our most Christian nation
And foremost philosophical generation—
At primary chrome of hair,

Astronomied Oes of eyes
And the white moons I tremble to behold
(More than my books did shake me, or a tale told)
And all her parts likewise.

She dwells beside a water
And counts the bins and ties the sacks pardee
And cleaves my closest thought, and is to me
A most rare miller's daughter.

# The Present State of Poetry.

By EDWIN MUIR.

TO disengage the qualities and estimate the rank of the poetry of one's generation is peculiarly difficult. In the first place the qualities which the critic has to discern (seeing that he, too, is of the age) are in a sense his own, and cannot be seen objectively ; and secondly, it is impossible for him to separate his reactions to them from the rank of the poetry which they distinguish. A third thing will influence his judgment : the quantity of contemporary poetry. There is very little poetry being written to-day, and it is legitimate criticism to note that by its nature it is not poetry that could be produced in great quantity. It is the kind of poetry which is written in an age of general poetic debility, which is achieved against the current, caught adroitly where it can be caught, or seized desperately in the midst of hostile forces. It has the qualities of a thing which must use its wits : it is stubborn, violent, or clever. In the Victorian age poetry held its own : in the Romantic era it was supreme and even the prose writers were dominated by it. But to find another age in which the genius of prose was so immensely more powerful than that of poetry as it is now we have to go back to the eighteenth century.

That century was the century of enlightenment ; our age, too, is one of enlightenment, but on a far vaster scale. The genius of our generation, as Mr. Bertrand Russell has said, has gone into science, not into literature. And it seems to be a fact of experience that to the supremely creative, the poetic, power, the spirit of enlightenment, when it is widely disseminated, becomes inimical. Science, enlightenment, scepticism —these make us look coldly, and involuntarily, automatically so, upon the things which the poet must contemplate with passion. The theorist's impersonality of intellect becomes insensibly an impersonality of general habit, and eventually an impersonality of feeling. We have all been influenced by the theories of science, and the intellectualisation of imaginative

literature has been going on for a long time. It produced in the generation before last such things as the dissolvent plays of Ibsen, and, perhaps its most finished expression, the pity of Anatole France, so admirable in the man, so inadequate in the artist. For France did not pity the immediate object, nor even pity in him the human race ; he pities humanity directly, passing by the particular case in indicating it, making it an open occasion for a quite impersonal emotion of which it only served to remind him, but which it did not intensify. The pity of France is not typical of this age, but his impersonality is ; our emotions are colder, more generalised, more intelligent perhaps, than they were fifty years ago.

The growth and dissemination of science has made our approach to experience more impersonal ; the circumstances of modern life tend to do the same thing. No one has investigated properly the effect of the growth of cities upon literature, politics, and popular conceptions of morality. Yet the effect of such a vast change must have been great. It is impossible, for example, to conceive a poem like " The Waste Land " being written anywhere except in a huge modern city ; the small, dirty, leisurely London of fifty years ago did not contain the atmosphere for it. The atmosphere was not there, but neither was any way of life, any class of experience, which could make such utterance as this comprehensible. As we read " The Waste Land " modern London, though not deliberately evoked, seems to rise up around us like a wall. Miss Sitwell's poetry, too, recalls us to London, and if we except that of Mr. Squire's followers, there is hardly any poetry of the present day which does not do so. In the main, English poetry has been a poetry of the English country ; it is now a poetry chiefly of the town. This is a decisive change. But it is also a comprehensible and natural one ; for the cities are alive, the countryside is no longer so.

The effects of this vast change in the life of England must needs be infinitely complex, and finally impossible to define. The most one can do is to take hold of a few generalisations, obvious enough when stated, and yet, perhaps, generally overlooked. In the first place, life in a large city is necessarily more impersonal than life in the country. The difference, indeed, is so great that anybody coming to the city from the

country has to reorient his values or else remain permanently at a loss. Where formerly his contacts were all personal, here he finds that they are preponderantly collective. His circle of acquaintances has been superseded by a crowd, permanent but shifting, as much a part of the furniture of the streets as the houses and shops. For the individual has been substituted the mass, and to the mass the order of feelings which expressed his relations towards his circle of acquaintances is no longer relevant. He develops, therefore, another set, the peculiar set of impersonal feelings which all town-bred people carry about with them, without guessing it, from their birth, the feelings which seem to make them a part of the crowd and yet keep them outside it, which permit them to know it and yet ignore it. Everything, moreover, is on such a large scale, business, the populace, the machinery of life, that nothing seems to matter so much. A calamity is one in a series of calamities ; a man is part of a crowd. In the last hundred years England in general has come from the country to the city ; the city as we know it, moreover, is like nothing which the human race has seen before : these attitudes, these emotions, are therefore new. They were bound to influence thought and feeling, and to bring a different note into literature.

Still another thing has helped to change the atmosphere of England, and to change it subversively : the rapidity of change. In a stable order of society, or in solitude, men may listen to their feelings without much question, for these feelings correspond to the situation ; they have a sort of suitability. But where change is very rapid our reactions tend to become obsolete before we realise it. True of a past in which we always tend to live, the present delights in refuting them. They become confused, lose their force, and cease to give us satisfaction, as soon as we see that another set of responses which, however, we cannot command, would be more suitable. So it was inevitable that we should have in contemporary literature a general distrust of the feelings, a conditional or ironical presentation of them, and sometimes a frank reduction of them to their lowest factors : to those elements which men never distrust even when they distrust everything else.

These things, then, must be taken into account when we consider contemporary literature, for they are part of our

environment, and the creative writer lives not in a world of poetry but in his environment. If poetry is colder, more intellectualised, more sceptical, than it used to be, this, we see, is a natural result of the fact that contemporary thought and life impose upon us an increasingly impersonal attitude. If poetry is conditional and ironical, affirming and denying in one breath, what response could be more natural to a world which has changed so rapidly that no one knows where he stands ? And these attributes of modern poetry become more significant if we see them neither as qualities assumed, nor as a fashion, nor as a new approach to reality, but as a reaction, genuine if confused, to the world we know. The poetry of Mr. Eliot, Miss Sitwell and Mr. Graves, seen thus, is a poetry congruous with the nature of the age. It is neither a complete criticism nor a fulfilment ; for that we are still waiting. But the age makes it comprehensible, gives it validity ; we see clearly in it the forces which mould and the obstacles which inhibit modern life.

Let us take the testimony of the poets themselves. Miss Sitwell has a few very frank and illuminating notes in " Bucolic Comedies." " We are accused of triviality ; but poetry is no longer a just and terrible Judgment Day—a world of remorseless and clear light." " Modern heart-break is merely a dulling and a retrogression, a travelling backward : till man is no longer the bastard of beasts and of gods, but is blind, eyeless, shapeless as the eternal stones, or exists with the half-sentience of the vegetable world—a sentience that is so intensely concerned with the material world (as apart from the visual) that it is like the sentience of the blind." " This modern world is but a thin match-board flooring spread over a shallow hell. For Dante's hell has faded, is dead. Hell has no vastness ; there are no more devils who laugh or who weep—only the maimed dwarfs of life, terrible straining mechanisms, crouching on trivial sands, and laughing at the giants crumbling ! "

Let us turn to Mr. Eliot. " I have lost my passion," says Gerontion,

> " I have lost my passion ; why should I need to keep it
> Since what is kept must be adulterated ? "

and the queries go on through Mr. Eliot's poetry :

"Who clipped the lion's wings
And flea'd his rump and pared his claws ? "

"Where is the penny world I bought
To eat with Pipit behind the screen ?
Where are the eagles and the trumpets ? "

"What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish ? "

"What shall we do to-morrow ?
What shall we ever do ? The hot water at ten.
And if it rains, a closed car at four."

And with that finality which Mr. Eliot can communicate over such a keen undertone of rebellion :

"I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only."

It is the same cry as Miss Sitwell's. The "giants crumbling" —the lion with the clipped wings and flea'd rump ; the "trivial sands"—the "stony rubbish" ; the hell with "no vastness" —the "penny world" ; the sentience that is like "the sentience of the blind"—the key turned in the door once and turned once only : these are images of one and the same world, the modern world which has risen silently around us, and in which we have not learned to think and to feel.

The response of the poet to this world is not pessimism, for pessimism is a reasonable and traditional thing ; it is rather a bewilderment and distress of mind. The poet is not concerned because ideals do not correspond to realities (a great source of pessimistic poetry) ; he is hardly concerned with ideals at all. His bewilderment springs from something far more complex : the feeling that reality itself has broken down, that even the simple emotions, the instinctive reactions, are disorientated and lead us astray. This bewilderment has not the absoluteness of pessimism, but it is nevertheless more completely without consolations. There is a satisfaction in making an end of the matter and saying, like Leopardi :

"Non val cosa nessuna
I moti tuoi ; e fango è il mondo."

But the contemporary poet is not so sure that "the world is mud"; he does not know, indeed, what it is; for if even the physical reactions appear doubtful, anything may be true. The suffering which is reflected in his poetry is, therefore, the suffering of uncertainty, which, unlike all other kinds of suffering, has no power to distil its own alleviation. To him the miseries of the world are not even misery; for he cannot give them a meaning, or find a place for them in human life. Everything is conditional, everything is potential. Modern thought and modern life present the poet with a number of possible worlds, but not with the one which he needs if he is to feel, as well as speculate upon, reality. His temptation in this quandary is to accept these possible worlds provisionally, and build fanciful hypotheses round them.

This is what Mr. Graves has done in his later poetry. Miss Sitwell and Mr. Elliot describe the bewilderment and misery of the mind surrounded by uncertainty; Mr. Graves, too, has described that bewilderment and misery, but he has turned more and more of late years to a poetry whose chief implication is that anything may be true. It is a highly theoretical, very laborious, and intellectually serious, poetry of escape; and it is difficult to see what other kind of poetry the age presented to a poet with a philosophical turn. Donne, as Professor Grierson points out, "was in the first place a Catholic" and had moreover "a vast and growing store of the same scholastic learning, the same Catholic theology, as controlled Dante's thought, but jostling already with the new learning of Copernicus and Paracelsus." With that new learning Donne furnished the scholastic, Catholic mansion anew, transforming it so that from the inside at any rate it seemed something completely novel; yet the original edifice remained. But Mr. Graves, in whose mind the theories of Professor Freud, Dr. Rivers, Butler and Sir James G. Frazer jostle one another, has no cosmos in which to assemble them; the age provides none, and it is the lack of a framework of reality which makes his fancies remain merely fancies where Donne's are as concrete as ornaments on a great design. It is this that makes us feel when Mr. Graves describes the transmigration of Alexander the Great's soul into the body of a Chinese soldier that it is a mere hypothesis, whereas Donne's fantasy of the soul's transit

to Heaven is pure passion and imagination :

> " Who if she meet the body of the sun,
> Goes through, not waiting till his course be run ;
> Who finds in Mars his camp no corps of guard,
> Nor is by Jove, nor by his father barr'd ;
> But ere she can consider how she went.
> At once is at, and through the firmament."

What makes this passage of almost absurd fancy so moving, so serious, is Donne's absolute acceptance of the premises from which he starts. Without an unconditional belief in the immortality of the soul, and in time and eternity as its two states, poetry such as this could not be written. It is the lack of any metaphysical foundations to Mr. Graves's fancies which makes them sometimes so singularly cold, so unconvincing.

> " Why might we not approve adulterous license
> Increasing pleasurable experience ?
> What could the soul lose through the body's rapture
> With a body not its mate, where thought is pure ? "

The difference between the poetry of Donne and poetry such as this is the difference between absolute and conditional utterance, between what is true and what may or may not be true, between the poetry of a man living in a real world and that of one torn between several hypothetical ones, none of them acceptable. Donne's hypotheses started from problems which he had resolved by experience or by faith ; Mr. Graves's start from this premise or that, and in general from the unresolved problems of the age. Poetry of this kind may be witty, ironical, or suggestive, but it is not serious enough for its purpose, it is not effectual. For the pressing need of any age of transition is to cease to be one, to attain to a resolution of its problems, not to poetise them.

We have a host of theories, then, but among them no ruling theory ; a mass of enlightenment, but no faith in enlightenment; a number of ideals of society, but no hope that they will be realised. The world has changed around us, but we are not conscious of having changed it ; and the future is still more uncertain than the present. We have lost, in other words, the things which in a period of transition are always lost, but which with its passing return again, somewhat changed by the

fact that it happened. Among these are such conceptions as the cosmos, society, humanity, a general purpose, and, as an inevitable expression of these, such literary categories as the tragic, the pathetic, the comic. The present dislike for "the pathetic fallacy" and for *catharsis* is peculiar to a society which is not integrated. Once postulate a great order and these things become inevitable, for any enduring belief, the belief of a civilisation in God, in humanity, or in itself, makes certain things pathetic and tragic, giving its meaning naturally and involuntarily to the varied accidents of life. Ages of transition cannot give this significance to the accidents of their existence; in them accordingly the peculiarly significant categories of literature are questioned or are denied. Yet if we could write in the great pathetic vein, we should not question the validity of pathos; if we could attain to a catharsis, our doubts about its desirability would be resolved. We live in an interregnum, between a world which has passed and one not born: not in a new order, but rather in the chaos where a new order must be preparing. For if civilised societies change they also tend perpetually to reintegrate themselves; at its moment the stable order of life and thought, better or worse than its preceding type, returns.

The service of a period of transition is to make us conscious of the problems which the dead order could not solve. These problems accumulate; the old order thrusts them aside, goes on as long as it can, as if they did not exist. Then the crash comes; the order no longer is there; the problems, these and these alone, fill our minds. There is hardly an aspect of life, hardly a feeling or a general conception, which the universal questioning of our age has left untouched; and when order rises again we feel that everything will be changed. The progress of industrialism and the growth of cities have modified our feelings, our relations, our desires. The discoveries and theories of science have altered our conception of the nature of life, and of the origin and destiny of mankind and of the world. With these revolutions the last great era of literature, the Victorian, could do little. Nor can we do very much with them, for we are not so much conscious of them as of the universal uncertainty into which they plunge everything. Yet gradually that uncertainty must resolve into something

else, which will not be a dogma, nor a theory, but a living complex of beliefs, experiences, acceptances ; a new adaptation. The universe of science will then become real ; we will recognise it not merely as intellectually valid, but as the actual universe in which we live. " If the time should come," Wordsworth says, " when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the being thus produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of men." The poet will do so because nothing is wholly real until it finds an image as well as a formula for itself. For the image is the record that a conception has been steeped in the unconscious, and there accepted by the deeper potencies of the mind. Because it was once accepted in this way the cosmogony of the Bible is still in one sense more real than that of modern science ; for while we no longer accept it, we cannot but visualise it. God creating the world in seven days, " making " Adam and Eve and the animals and fishes, setting Heaven above us and Hell beneath, calling the world to account on the Day of Judgment : these are still as vivid as dreams, because once for a long time they had such reality that men could see them as if they were happening before their eyes. It is the measure of the mere intellectuality of the evolutionary theory of creation that it has never become a picture. It is hypothesis, not imaginative reality. Yet " the remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, the Mineralogist," to quote Wordsworth again, " will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings." The discoveries of modern science are certainly " material to us as enjoying and suffering human beings." They have revolutionised our conception of the three problems which chiefly concern poetry and mankind : the problems of creation, destiny and the nature of life : how we came to be, whither we go, and what we are. The reason why the poet has not taken these discoveries as the objects of his art can only be because they are not really

familiar to him, because while he accepts them intellectually, his unconscious has not accepted them.

If all this is so, there need be no wonder that poetry to-day is hard to write. Living in a world intellectually formulated the poet has to make it into a real one. His task is not so much to treat the universe of life as to evoke it. That world will sometime be evoked ; the universe of science will become as real to us as the universe of the Bible was to our predecessors ; the geologic ages, the dragons before the Flood, our first ancestors—these will become " genuine inmates of the household of man." They have already been absorbed into the science of psychology ; they will be absorbed into poetry because they must, because until they are they will not be humanised, and because if they are not humanised they will remain a remnant of defeated experience. There have been a few magnificent but abortive attempts to absorb them, the greatest of these " Also Sprach Zarathustra," with its new table of values, its acceptance of a world not anthropomorphic, its use of mythological material, its profound recognition of the unconscious, which forestalled so strikingly the later attitude of psychoanalysis. The universe to which Nietzsche tried to orient himself was indeed the universe which modern knowledge had revealed, but he rarely reached past a will-to-acceptance to acceptance itself. Yet we cannot feel that he failed because he came too soon. The fault lay rather within himself ; his inspiration as a poet was impure, like Shelley's. The resolution of the modern world into poetry might, one feels, have been achieved by him had his fanaticism and his ambition been less. The time was ripe, if he had been. As it is, the work of resolution has still to be done. When it is done the condition of a new productive era will be in existence.

# Turnkey.

By EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST.

*Is it the same Sordello in the dusk*
*As at the dawn?*

JOHN JAFFERY, warder at the prison of Osmagorban. His day out was Thursday, and it generally rained, but this particular day, the seventeenth of the month of April, was fine. Jaffery was mildly pleased on this account. Not that he was in the habit of taking much notice of the weather—even when it was his day out. There was always the cinema. This last he looked upon definitely as something to fall back on, preferring a walk or a talk, or both, with a friend. Sitting in a dark and tightly-packed room always gave him an unpleasant sensation, as if he had himself entered an institution like that from which it was his duty to prevent egress; and the seductions of a formalised life such as was presented to his eyes in both places—the cinema and the prison—were not sufficiently distracting to constitute a holiday, in any sense. Being a person of few friends and no longer in his first youth, a loud and noisy conversation with such acquaintances as he had in the town itself afforded him almost as little pleasure.

Then there was Home: Home being a rather cramped cottage on the far side of Osmagorban. It was cramped because it had not been originally designed to hold seven people—its present burden; and John rarely felt inclined to increase the general discomfort by making an eighth, even for a day. He loved his father, liked his mother, and was by turns irritated and amused by his various brothers and sisters; but not all these emotions and the people that caused them could make him spend more than an occasional day-out at home. Offended his mother might be, and frequently was; he always protested that he would "turn up one of these days," which he did, but not before Mrs. Jaffery had begun to speak of him with the mixture of pity and acrimony which is reserved for those who have gone hopelessly to the bad. He knew that she spoke of

him in this way, but did not resent it. She was growing very old now, and would soon die. His father, he supposed, would die too, and the family would then disperse. This thought assailed him at times with a vaguely menacing scrutiny, but he returned its gaze in his dispassionate way, thus bringing shame upon its hostility. He truly took everything as it came, dreaming many things in his philosophy, but firmly refusing to allow the practice they advocated to impinge upon the resisting stuff of reality as it shaped, or was shaped by, his life itself. His heaven none knew, least of all himself ; his earth was a definite and undiffused matter of a few contrasts, strong enough in themselves to suggest a heaven to one more or less sophisticated than he himself had ever had the chance of being. Iron bars, in this particular instance, made a cage ; not so much for the inmates of Osmagorban prison as for the warder Jaffery, who was responsible for a certain section of them.

Once, some years before, he had been asked by a lady visitor to the prison why he had chosen the profession of warder. An answer she had had, but it was slow in coming, and had satisfied the lady visitor more than it had Jaffery himself. He said that his father had wished it, so he had done as he was told. His subsequent dissatisfaction with this answer sprang from the fact that it seemed to him to display an embittered, resigned state of mind, such as he abhorred, and was far from feeling.

But he had constantly to be gathering himself together with the unuttered words : " That is not for me to do, or think, or say." He would not permit himself licences : he was severe with himself when he need not have been. He always felt as if he had made a grimace when the wind was changing, and had been forced to retain the distortion ever afterwards.

His way out of the prison lay past an office room through the open door of which he noticed a calendar hanging on the wall. April 17, it said in loud black letters. Somebody must be careful about tearing off the days, he thought, as he passed through a door into the street. He walked slowly along in the sun, trying to decide how he should spend his day. Appeared a cake shop, into which he turned for the purchase of some sandwiches and a sausage roll. These would be enough for his lunch, wherever he should choose to eat it. The purchase

hastened his decision, and instead of turning down into the centre of the town, he took the left-hand road, which led eventually on to a wide stretch of heathery common-land outside Osmagorban.

To take a road running at right angles to that which led to his home had not caused him to think of it, but striking away in exactly the opposite direction was a different matter. Besides, he had just remembered something. A few days earlier he had had a letter from his mother containing the information —buried in a mass of aggrieved reproaches—that his second sister, Dorothy, was coming home for a holiday from Doncaster, where she occupied the post of assistant in a lady's hair-dressing establishment. He had always liked Dorothy —had, at any rate, liked to be with her, and the possibility of seeing her again made him pause in the road. Should he go home after all, and bear with his mother's scolding for the sake of his sister, whom he had not seen since Christmas ?

He stood looking vaguely about him. He had now reached the edge of the town. On his left was a little slope—where did it run ? His eye following slowly the yellow sunlit road, travelled up to a long, low hatted station building. The hat had a sort of lace edging depending from it. For a moment there was no one for him to see, but suddenly a figure emerged from the building, and began to walk down the slope towards him. It was a woman, dressed in dark blue and carrying a small bag.

When she was near enough for him to see her clearly, he called out to her : " Dorothy ! "

She came on and stood before him, letting him look down (for he was a head taller than she) on to her face.

" I thought you were home already ! " he said, still with surprise in his voice.

" Why, no ! Did mother let you think I was ? "

" No . . . no. I only thought . . . " He looked down at the bag she was carrying and took it from her hand.

" It's your day out, I suppose, Jack ? " she smiled at him. " What luck, meeting you like this ! Where were you going to ? "

" Going ? I'm not sure." He peeped hesitatingly at his sister under his eyebrows, then produced from his pocket the

packet of lunch. This he disclosed before her as a schoolboy shows forbidden sweets to a master.

" I was taking my lunch," he said.

This time Dorothy laughed outright.

" What a funny one you are, Jack ! Why don't you go and see them all at home ? They'll be missing you awfully."

" I don't think I'm very popular with mother these days, Dorothy," he said.

" That's your own fault." She became suddenly grave. " It isn't fair never to go and see them—it isn't, really."

" I know. But somehow . . . " He looked away and squeezed the packet back into his pocket. Then he turned to her and his eyes opened pathetically on to her face so that she said within herself : " This is my brother Jack, whom I love very much and never see."

" Do stay with me to-day, Dorothy," he pleaded. " Don't go home till tea-time. They'll never know you haven't just come. Do ! . . . I never see you now and I've only got one day . . . "

She gave in at once.

" You'll have to share your lunch with me, then," she said. " I'm quite hungry."

" Give me your bag," he said, as they started to walk.

At a turn of the road they met a man whom John knew They stopped to speak, and a large puddle in the road reflected the immobile folds of Dorothy's dark skirt. The man looked furtively at her, as if he were not quite sure whether she was conscious that he knew who she was. Then she spoke to him :

" Aren't you going to look at me, then, Tim Bowles ? " she asked, rather hardly, it seemed to John.

The man looked at her.

" Oh yes . . . " he said, in a foolish way. Then : " Been away some time, haven't you ? "

" I took the job six months ago," she replied.

" Like it ? "

" Oh, I'm all right in it."

He seemed to be trying to patronise her, to take an elderly tone of condescension with her. But the effort was not a success.

" Come back for a holiday, have you ? " he went on, obviously enough.

She dealt very simply with him. Nothing could have been more candid than the tacit manner in which she gave him back the thoughts he did not dare to express—handed them back to him as who should return to a curio-dealer some object that may be interesting enough in its way, but emphatically not in one's line.

"Yes," she answered. "They let me go for a fortnight. I've been ill." Her glance flickered over his face, appraising it.

John stood looking at them both. He was not sufficiently interested to be puzzled by the odd atmosphere surrounding their encounter, but he felt that it had lasted long enough.

"Come on now, Dorothy," he said, as if they were in a hurry. "'Bye, Tim!"

"Good-bye," said Dorothy composedly.

Mr. Bowles pursued his way townwards.

"Where are we going, Jack?" asked Dorothy, after they had walked another half-mile.

John stopped and looked about him.

"Let's go and sit over there," he said, pointing into the heath where grew a number of silver birches rising above scattered clumps of gorse. The sky, spring-pale, shone through the delicate leaves of the birches, which glittered in the sunlight.

They plunged ankle-deep into the stiff heather. Suddenly Dorothy tripped on a root and fell. In helping her to her feet, John saw her face as he had not seen it before that day.

"Have you been really ill?" he asked, standing in front of her.

She looked at his frowning forehead and smiled.

"Not very," she answered. "It was 'flu, I think. Leaves you weak. I feel shaky now, after falling like that."

They sat down on the edge of a gravel-pit. The birches were behind them, while around lay the stumps of larger trees. Dorothy leant back against one of these and took off her hat. Like her brother, she had red hair and curious opaque grey eyes, beautiful and expressionless as those of an animal. For a few minutes she looked about her without speaking, seeming to recover her vitality with an effort. Conscious that her brother was looking intently at her, she did not yet return his look, but kept herself apart for a space, letting her straying

thoughts wander among the undergrowth below her at the bottom of the pit. She was roused by the sound of John's voice asking her a question.

"Did you mind meeting Tim Bowles?"

At that she looked up and their eyes met like blank walls placed face to face.

"No," she said, and he could tell by her voice that she wanted him to question her further, but could not pursue the subject on her own account.

"He was sweet on you at one time, wasn't he?"

Still she kept his eyes. "Yes, he was."

"When?"

"Before I went away."

"He could have stopped you going," said John.

"Maybe. But he didn't." She smiled slightly and lifting one hand to her face, smoothed away the smile from the corners of her mouth. She remained thus, with her hand over her chin.

"Maybe you didn't want him to?" John leant towards her, beginning to realise that this was not the same sister he had known six months before.

All at once a look of great sadness came into her face.

"Did he tell you that?" she asked.

John was disconcerted. "No, he didn't. I only thought perhaps . . . I should have thought a man wouldn't have given you up."

He expected her to laugh at this, but she did not do so.

"It wasn't like that at all," she said decisively. Her decision seemed not to belong to waking everyday life, but to be infused with the overstrained quality of a dream.

"Then how was it?" John persisted, with a certain sturdiness.

"He was such a poor creature. I couldn't love a man who wanted so little from me. So I told him that, and let him choose."

John plunged a hand into the pocket of his jacket. "Did he understand?"

Dorothy laughed. "I don't expect he did! Anyhow, I went away and it all broke up. I was glad." She looked hard at him again. "Wouldn't you have been?"

He seemed to ward her off. "I? I don't know, I'm sure. I can't think . . . "

"If you knew a woman loved you——"

He interrupted her sharply.

"I'm not sure as I want a woman to love me. There's a jolly sight too much of that kind of love in the world—that I can see!" He spoke with sudden vehemence, and on his face was a look of fright.

She looked at him indulgently, as if he were a child. "Some don't get any of it, all the same," she said.

"All the better for them."

She seemed to give in, saying in an altered voice that she was hungry and wanted something to eat.

They shared the sausage roll and the sandwiches, eating happily, and even seeming to forget the subject of their former conversation. Thus they sat and talked idly for two hours. Then Dorothy said suddenly: "How often d'you get a day out?"

There was no answer and looking up, she spoke again almost sharply: "Why don't you listen, Jack?"

Her brother jumped and hastily swallowed a piece of bread.

"Sorry. What did you say?"

"How often do they let you out?"

John smiled. "That's it. *Let me out.* That's just about what it comes to. Oh—Thursdays."

"And you never go home?" Her tone was severe.

"Not *never!*" Then he added: "But not often, all the same. Why! The house is as crowded as chickens in a coop. What's the good of my going and making it worse? I feel cooped up enough as it is, without going from one prison to another on my one day out!"

"I suppose you're thinking there won't even be room for me?" put in Dorothy quickly.

"I didn't say that. Of course Mother can always make room—but she doesn't love doing it!" A tired look came into his face, and lines appeared round his mouth. After a minute he went on: "Mother'll be having you for a fortnight, and she won't mind anything for that. But when it comes to one day . . . like with me . . . "

"Well . . . "

Suddenly he broke out fiercely.

" She's always on at me about the prison. I get out of the damned place for one day and then have to spend it talking about a life I hate ! Father's the same—thinks I ought to get on, get made head-warder or something of that sort—like he was himself. And when I see that they expect it of me, and how proud it'd make them feel, I haven't the heart to tell them I'd chuck the whole thing to-morrow if I weren't too lazy to face getting another job."

Dorothy was looking intently at him under her fine straight eyebrows.

" Why d'you hate it that much, Jack ? "

His answer burst from him almost before she had finished her question, as thunder follows lightning in a bad storm.

" Because I feel I'm locked up as well ! When I turn the key of a cell I feel that I'm being locked out, not that the man's being locked in ! " The image that obsessed him became clearer and clearer in his mind, and as it did so his eyes, that were so like his sister's, became more and more opaque and like an animal's. It seemed as if a mist were gathering inside the pupils.

Dorothy had never seen him let himself go like this before, and she was frightened. Putting out her hand, she grasped his arm below the elbow. " Do they know this ? " she said.

" They . . . who ? Mother and father ? Of course they don't ! They'd think I'd gone potty if I were to tell them ! So I have, in some ways."

" You mustn't let them know ! " said Dorothy vehemently, shaking his arm. " They've got enough to think about without worrying about you—especially when they think you're the only person they can be *sure* about ! "

" *Sure about !* What about you ? "

" I don't really count. No, you know I don't ! So don't try to pretend I do ! You're the one they care about."

" Dorothy ! " There was agony in his voice. " Dorothy ! Don't let them be sure of me ! Talk to them ! " He leant forward, so that their faces were nearly touching, and went on speaking in a sort of whisper. " Talk to them ! That's it ! Make them see I'm not much . . . that you're the one to

count on. See ? Then I'll be able to get away. Make them care for me no more'n you care for this bag."

He clutched up the bag as he spoke, the top came open, and something dropped out of it and lay between them.

For a moment of silence they both looked down at a wig of grey bobbed hair that lay askew on the heather, the strands of hair spread out and caught among the wiry twigs. The thin wind disturbed the meshes and blew them about.

John took up the wig and looked at it.

" What's this ? " he said in a foolish voice, the agony of his nervous outburst still showing in his face.

Then Dorothy began laughing hysterically and twitched the wig away from his hands.

" Not for me, Jack ! Did you think I was going to wear it ? I've got to remake it, that's all. Now you've untidied it ! " She began smoothing the grey hair, holding up the wig in her clenched fist.

" Never mind it now." John tried to take it from her to put it back into the bag, but she held it away from him at arm's length above her head. The wind blew the hair wildly about and through the locks John could see the pale blue of the April sky, as through the leaves of the birches. Below the wig Dorothy's eyes, as grey as the hair, held a strange, triumphant expression, as though she were bearing the head of an enemy upon her hand.

" Never mind it now ! " repeated John, still gazing at the wig. " You've got to do what I want ! To make mother see—"

But Dorothy seemed not to be listening. She took the wig carefully in both hands, and began to fit it on to her own head. It was tight, but she got it on, and turning round, looked out at her brother from the frame of grey. The expression of secret triumph was still in her eyes.

The look of urgency on her brother's face turned instantly to that of terror and hatred. He jumped to his feet.

" Take it off ! Take it off ! " he shouted, but he did not attempt to touch her. " It's awful—that thing ! You've made yourself old ! Old ! Old ! "

And he began running away from her across the heather, tripping as she had done, and pulling up roots of heather in his haste to get away to the road at the edge of the common.

Arrived there, he sat down with his back to the spot whence he had come, holding his knees with his hands, and shaking as if in a fever. In his mind the horror of his life stretched like a slow-moving river and on its surface, swinging gently in the current, the wig pursued an endless way.

Hearing a sound, he looked down and saw a foot on the road beside him, but he did not dare to look up.

"It's all right! I've taken it off," came in a flat voice from Dorothy.

Then he rose to his feet and looked at his sister. She had put on her hat and held in her hand the bag—closed, with the wig inside it once more. She looked tired and pathetic and simple, like a child who has tried to understand something and failed.

For some minutes they stood thus, not meeting each other's eyes. Dorothy looked up and down the road, but there was no one in sight. Then the wind blew a stronger gust, and she put up a hand to tidy her hair under her hat. This done, she searched her brother's face with her eyes.

"Why did you run away from me, Jack?"

"Because I was frightened."

"Of that thing—that false hair?"

"Yes."

She paused a moment after his last word, turning the bag over and over in her hands.

"It's not difficult to frighten men," she said, "when they're in that state. I wanted to see . . . They won't keep you long. . . . It's hardly fair on Mother and Dad. . . ." Her voice trailed away. John did not move. Then she sighed and looked up at him finally. "I suppose I ought to be getting on home now, Jack," she said.

John did not reply at once. Then he said "Yes," as if a difficult problem had suddenly been solved in his mind.

They walked in silence to the end of the road at the bottom of which lay the prison buildings. Then she turned and looked straight at him once more.

"Promise me you'll stay," she said, putting her hand over his.

But his face went hard as a stone.

"No!"

You must ! You must ! You'll get over feeling like that —you will, *really !* "

" You've done a lot to help me to, haven't you ? " he said crudely, and drawing away his hand he stepped back into the road.

" I didn't mean it," she said in a hurt, sulky voice, and turned instantly away along the road into the centre of the town.

John did not look after her, and the hard expression remained on his face as he walked slowly down towards the prison.

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# Salt.

By RICHARD CHURCH.

Now having quarrelled and repaired the breach,
Let us praise salt together. You may think
This but an attitude of emulation
Born of a worship for great Socrates,
Suspected once for the anonymous
Praiser of salt, who figured in the Banquet.
No ! You will not think so. I know your mind.
It is familiar as my own. They stand together,
Joint adversaries to rebellious passion ;
Sometimes phalanxed, Roman shield to shield,
Against this northern onslaught of the blood ;
Such blood as you and I have felt assail us,
The sudden treacheries and artful beauty,
So cold, austere, and yet not to be quelled
By the iron plaques and crooked arms of the mind.
And that companionship through war on war
Has taught us trench-truths. Such are not forgotten
When shambles dry, and lands are ploughed again.
As far as mortals may, we know each other ;
Having spilled the ichor from our wounded minds,
Mingled it, and there, upon the field,
Bandaged each other as we paused for breath
In the harsh battle where none ever dies,
But hacks, and groans, and bleeds, being immortal.
Yet oftentimes, relaxing, weak and spent,
We snuffed the sweat and crimson of the foe
And envied that rank heat, and the crude lust
Which all our weary and distasteful strife
Could not put back, but only gave more strength.
But we know darker truths than this, that reach
Past simple loyalty. The treacherous taint
Crept from the foreign camp opposed to us
With songs learned there, that held the rhythm of
blood,
And melodies of union. Sudden doubt
Palsied our arms ; minds weakly took to musing,

And wandered all unmailed up secret paths.
There followed fraternising with the foe,
Whispered discoveries of lineage
Merging, and more immediate parenthood.
Therefore the struggle was not face to face,
Mind with mind against the surging blood ;
But sometimes I would fail you, follow lures
That sang the mermaids' song, and led me back
Down all our human paths to the seashore,
Where once the slimy monster dragged himself.
Reared up, and looked on dry land with an eye
That wearied of the water-broken hues,
And now aspired to drink the light direct.
And sometimes you betrayed that aspiration,
Playing me false with fawning kindnesses
And sultry claims that were love's counterfeit.
After such mutual treacheries we now
Stand here together, having reached the sea.
And in our ears there sounds the sad reproach
As the dark, straining body, fin by fin,
Relapses from the shore, and sinks again
To those dull vistas of marine despair,
The trailing roe, and piscine apathy.
This is the bitter savour vain mankind
Shall taste at last, when all the grotto-potions
Stirred near the Spring, in Aphrodite's garden,
Have staled upon the tongue. That ancient shape,
That ocean pioneer groping its way
Up through the roots of spore-engendered forests,
Was the first herald of the Cytherean,
Who followed soon, upon her seaborne shell.
Our minds have sipped the sweetness from her cup.
And are but cloyed. Now let us drain the dregs,
Giving our heritage the primæval tang.
Old Socrates was wise ; he lauded salt ;
And later still, drained a more bitter draught.
Come, love, be reconciled, and praise with him.
His final tonic we'll ignore—for now !

# Andron, the Good-for-Nothing—(iii)

By Alexander Nievierov.

The earth started to turn in the wrong direction, the sun arose from the wrong side. The old man Sienin is dying—there is no place where he might receive the Sacrament. Evlakha Kondratieva gave birth to a child—there is nobody to christen it. Such a good management it is! She gave birth to thirteen children during the old régime—and never had such a worry.

Nikanor, the husband of Evlakha, walks about in wrath. He swears at Lenin, swears at Andron, swears at all the commune.

A nice trick they have invented!

He looks into the closet—there is a large boiler in it. One could put a whole sucking pig in it!

Shall he go to the other village for the priest? How much will the priest ask for it? One must drive the horse there, one must drive it back. He will christen the child himself.

He lighted the stove and brought in some water.

"All right! I'll call him Vanka—he will be Ivan Nikanorytch. It is just the same—he will grow up if he does not die!"

Evlakha wonders in her bed.

"What are you doing, man?"

"I want to christen the boy."

"Stop talking nonsense! I will not let you mock the baby! Better let him stay unchristened."

Nikanor swears violently.

"You stop giving birth to children, d'ye hear? Shall I suffer till I am hundred years old? Is it a joke to drive the horse to the other village?"

"Do I give them birth by myself? You stick to me yourself every night!"

"Be quiet!"

"Your job is pleasant, you think only about yourself!"

Nikanor scowled.

"Don't upset me, Evlakha, in such a position. You know, I am a hot-headed man. Better be quiet when I am angry."

And Evlakha answered him:

"Thank you very much! I stayed quiet for thirty years!"

Nikanor is a very hot-headed man. He stands near Evlakha's bed and thinks. Devil take her! If one strikes her in a wrong place, one may injure her—another worry. To the hospital—twenty versts; from the hospital—twenty versts. And we say: freedom! May one give freedom to the women?

* * *

The old man Sienin lies in his bed like a log. He shuts his eyes—darkness. He opens his eyes—darkness again. No one has heard the chimes for three months! There is nobody to take off the sins, weighing on his soul. He asked with tears his people to go for the priest to the other village—they did not go. Such is the new management—the old and sick people are not wanted.

O Lord, be merciful to human weakness! Sienin, the old man, is not guilty before You! You see Yourself: the earth has turned in the wrong direction. The commune was born in the far-away town, in the large town, never seen before. She walked through the small towns, she walked through the villages, hamlets, steppes, forests and ravines. She came to the village Roghachevo, lifted everybody by the hair, mixed up everything. The father shouts, the son shouts. The husband shouts, the wife shouts. No one can hear the old man's voice.

Sienin lies in his bed like a log and conscientiously speaks out his sins. Here they are, O Lord, voluntary and involuntary, by word, by deed, conscious and unconscious. Everything is in front of you! He has sold two bad horses and did not tell the buyers. He has killed a sick oow and did not tell the buyers. The devil has confounded him. He thrusted a forged piece of paper money into the church collection-box—another devil has confounded him. He has sinned twice with a strange old woman. Quite recently during that same commune, O Lord!

Everybody started to say around him :

" It is not a sin ! "

His own old wife died a long time ago, and his blood got a little excited. The devil has entered into one of his ears and went out through the other.

It is not a sin !

O Lord, do not send him to eternal torture ! He did not sin by himself, the devils were tempting him all his life !

Sienin lies like a log in his bed ; a tear creeps out of his right eye, his left eye is closed. He wants to open it, but it does not open itself He wants to lift up his hand, but it does not lift itself up. A white dove is flying, above his bed—of course it is an angel of God, sent from Heaven to earth. A wicked demon with calf's horns stands in the corner, his eyes glow like coals. He stamps his hoofs, he drives the dove away with his dog's tail.

The white dove beats its wings—it is easier to breathe. The demon snorts out infernal fire—one cannot breathe. The white dove says in a tender voice :

" This soul is mine ! "

The demon says in a frightful voice :

" This soul is mine ! "

An old woman approached with a crutch in her hands. She struck Sienin across his hand, the hand got numb. She struck him on his legs—the legs got numb. She pressed his left side with her crutch—good-bye, mother earth ! The bells rang in all the churches. The high mountains arose, the thick forests grew up. He does not hear how they bang the door in the cottage. He does not hear anything, he does not see anything. Only the hellish demon's eyes are still glowing.

" My soul ! "

The dove took the old soul, that had sinned much—and the soul became a white snowdrop from the wings of the white dove, the lips of the old man Sienin smiled from ineffable joy, and the smile remained on his dead lips.

The Lord has forgiven him.

The girls and the married women sing, they are never sorrowful. Either they have a special kind of eyes that can see only merry things, or there is no such a sorrow at all that

can make them stop their singing. Maxim Ivanovitch unloaded forty poods according to the order of the Ispolkom and thought that the village Roghatchevo will blacken together with its master.

No !

Trifon Samoylytch unloaded fifty poods according to the order of the Ispolkom and thought that the village Roghatchevo will fall through together with its master.

No !

They drove Lykian Lukianytch to the House of Forced Labour and thought that the sun will stop giving light, but the sun shines as before and the wind blows as before. The rain falls, the stars shine at night, the moon walks about like a guard, over the fields, the forests, the far-away villages, and the neighbouring villages. Nothing has moved from its place. The girls do not come home and the married women do not come home. The strange wife presses herself to the strange husband, the strange husband keeps the strange wife under his coat till the cock crows for the second time. An apple is good in one's own garden, but it is still better in the garden of another. Narrow paths, tramped out by two people, walking side by side, appeared in the by-streets. The wattle hedges in the backyards got worn out because of the two backs leaning on them. The grass near the wattle-hedges got crumpled by one back. The trace of a girl, the trace of a young woman, the trace of a young man.

One cannot do anything.

Moscow is a city, Kazan is a city, Samara is a city. Roghatchevo is a village, Hudoyarovo is a village. It is rumoured that people are not content in Moscow, it is rumoured that people are not content in Kazan. Roghatchevo is a cauldron boiling with indignation.

Take care, the commune of Andron !

We will tear you with hundreds of teeth. We will beat you with hundreds of hands.

But it is not enough !

We will tramp upon you with hundreds of feet.

And even this is not sufficient !

We will burn you alive at a stake. We will tie you to a

horse's tail and drag you across fields, mountains and ravines, bleeding and mutilated.

Take care, the Andron's commune !

Everything will be remembered against you : the eight boards taken from Cheremushkin for general use, as well as ninety poods of corn unloaded according to the order of the Ispolkom. The big bell will strike on the belfry, the small ones will strike too. The frightened pigeons will fly away from the chimes, the stupefied sparrows will scatter in all directions. The padlock, hung by Andron, will fall down, the church doors, shut by Andron, will open again. The saints with their black faces will rejoice. The priest will put on his Easter chasuble, the deacon will put on his new surplice. The priest will lift up his lighted censer and pronounce in a voice that was not heard for so long :

" And for ever and ever ! "

The village Roghatchevo will respond together with the deacon :

" Amen ! ' '

And everything will be as it was before.

The stage in the priest's house will be taken to pieces, the damaged boards will be returned to Cheremushkin, and people will remember the past :

" In which year was it ? "

The cauldron is boiling in the village of Roghatchevo. The scythes and axes are being sharpened : the peasants prepare to sabre the commune of Andron.

Death !

But the girls and married women sew a red flag for the commune.

One cannot understand anything.

The Ispolkom people have brought some satin stuff from the town. Annushka Prokhorova is the principal cutter. She squeezed her old mother into a corner—it is good enough for her. She put a sewing-machine on the table, spread the satin stuff like a table-cloth. She called in the girls, whispered something into the ear of the married women. As if they were going to marry the unchristened commune. The sewing-machines clatter, the scissors snip, the girls embroider on the red stuff with blue silk :

" Proletarians of all countries " . . .

One comes into the cottage, another goes out of the cottage. What holiday is it ? Yashka Mazla is also here, as well as Fedka Badyla and Grishka Kopchik with a wooden leg—Andron's principal adviser. He smoothes his moustache with his left hand, he holds a thick cane in his right hand. A lively man ! He also wants to please the young women. That's why he always carries a horn-comb in his left pocket, that's why his hair is always smooth. The real man consists of a head before everything ; one may not look at the legs. They were quite good, but a bourgeois shell tore them off, at the front, when he was fighting for the poor. The soviet factory made a wooden leg for him, painted it with black paint, shod it with a piece of iron, in order to make it last.

It does not matter.

The real man consists of a head after all !

The girls embroider with blue silk on the red stuff, and sing songs with five voices :

" Don't swear at me, mother,
Now we are free to do what we like !
I'll lie down if I like, I'll get up if I like,
I'll go and spend a night with Ivan.
If Ivan becomes conceited
I'll find another lover." . . .

What a nice arrangement it is !

* * *

Vancha looks for Lukeriya and cannot find her. Nikanor looks for Evlakha, and cannot find her. Erofey asks at every cottage :

" Have you seen my wife ? "

The three men walk about like hunters, following the trace of a hare—wheels turn in their heads. One wheel turns—they would like to kill the devil's commune on the spot. Another wheel turns—they would like to thrash somebody against a corner. Can one possibly live in such a way ? The Ispolkom tortures them with its orders, and in addition to this the women seem to have swallowed some wild grass. The tax is being collected in corn and wool, and in addition to this there is such disorder at home. The broom lies at the

threshold—nobody takes it. There is nobody to fill the wash-stand with water, there is nobody to bring one's boots.

Ekh, how one would like to thrash one's wife for such nice little tricks!

And the three women, like three young girls, suck up to Annushka Prokhorova. As if they never had any children, as if they never had any husbands. They forgot their household, they forgot their cattle, all the home things became unnecessary.

But the real misfortune is not in this.

The real misfortune is that it seems that they never had any husbands. They speak about Andron, they speak about Grishka Kopchik, they speak about the red flag embroidered with blue. They do not say a word about their own husbands. Andron is good, Grishka is good, the satin stuff is good, but their own husbands are not worth anything.

Lukeriya even said about Vancha:

"What a man, God forgive him!"

And Evlakha said something still worse about Nikanor:

"My idol wants to fight me every night—does not give me any rest. Would I be the same woman if I were married to another man?"

The young girls and women laugh and joke:

"We ought to arrange a strike!"

* * *

Andron sits at the Ispolkom—order after order. All the interior of the Ispolkom is covered with papers pasted on the walls: forbidden to spit, forbidden to smoke, forbidden to use vile words. The land decree, the alimentation decree, the women's affairs decree. The transport tax, the food tax, the Gubernia Alimentation department, the District Alimentaiton department. And everything to be fulfilled promptly, without delay. The signature of Lenin, the signature of Kalinin, the signature of Andron with a large paraph. One would not mind if there were only Lenin's and Andron's signatures. But there is Annushka's signature too! Annushka Prokhorova's! She is also there, as the president of the Women's Department. There is a flag above Andron's desk, there is a flag above Annushka's desk. Both flags are red with golden tassels. Above Andron's desk there is an inscription:

"Proletarians of all countries." . . . Above Annushka's desk "Comrades, women. . . ."

The Saint Nikolai hung for forty years in the front corner, during the old régime. Andron ordered :

"Take him off ! A prejudice of dark masses."

One cannot do anything.

He brought from the town an old man with a white beard and said :

"This is Karla Marksov, we shall give him the best place ! "

An order was issued to Tikhon Bieliakov, the joiner of Roghatchevo :

"Immediately to equip a frame, painted with crimson paint."

He put Karl Marx in Nikolai's place, in the front corner, and placed two more on each side of him : Lenin and Trotzky. Annushka gave an order to the Women's Department : girls and women made three wreaths out of pine-tree branches and hung a red ribbon above the busts.

Sofron Semenytch Potughin meditated for a long time. At last he made up his mind to go and have a look. He came to the Ispolkom—it was true ! A grey-haired old man stood in the corner, with hair like that of a priest. And two more people at his side. One was blinking his eye, the other had his cap on, a pointed beard, a face unlike that of a peasant. He saw also the wreaths of pine branches, the red ribbon and the two banners with golden tassels. Only an image-lamp was missing.

Potughin looked at all that in a melancholy way, spat, and went away. He met Mikhaila in the street, and shook his head.

"I have just been in your son's chapel. Very good, indeed—one couldn't do it better. He created some new saints."

And Mikhaila answered him like a little boy :

"I have no will of my own ! You see yourself, I am sitting like a flea under somebody's nail ! "

Whose will is it then ? It is not Mikhaila's will, it is not Potughin's will, and all the village of Roghatchevo says in one voice :

"They work without our consent ! "

Granny Matrena wanted to say her motherly word in order to bring to reason her good-for-nothing son, but Andron only smiled :

" Don't get upset, mother ! It is difficult for an old person to understand. I love you and will never offend you, but I shall do as I want ! "

" But you do not please anybody when you do it, sonnie ; people are discontented. . . ."

" They are dark, that's why they are not content ! "

Mikhaila took offence.

" How are you then ? Light ? "

Andron did not even speak to him :

" You're illiterate, father ! "

Mikhaila sat for a long time without lifting his head up, clenching his strong peasant teeth. But when his heart got full of rage, he stood up. He looked around the old rustic cottage with his glowing eyes, and remained motionless for a short while : Karla Marksov was even there, near the Little Mother of God, on her left side. He has planted them everywhere, the son of a dog ! He will soon paste up all the cottage with foreign people !

But it was not really Karla Marksov's fault.

Mikhaila simply could not bear it any longer.

He took a knitting needle and started to pick out the eyes of a grey-haired old man with a large beard. He couldn't possibly come back to his right senses, and could not tear himself away from it. He was ready to pick to pieces all the wall of the cottage.

" A-a, devils ! You've got the power now ! "

Granny Matrena seized him by the shirt, speaking to him in a tearful voice :

" Don't sin, father, for Christ's sake ! "

But Mikhaila was ready to pick out granny's eyes too.

" Get away ! "

" Don't sin, for Christ's sake ! "

Mikhaila lifted up his left hand—and granny rolled across the cottage heels over head. She hit a bench with her temple and remained lying, like a hen, with her hands stretched. Some blood streamed in a narrow little path along her face and dyed a little wrinkle near her kind mouth. Mikhaila

looked at granny—she did not get up. He would like her to swear at him, to shame him : "ekh, you, shameless, dishonest creature ! " but she did not even groan.

Mikhaila had a scare.

His feet and hands trembled—he did not know what to do. On the wall there was Karla with his eyes picked out ; on the floor—Granny Matrena with a red little stream near her kind mouth. Mikhaila sat down near her, pulled her by the sleeve, spoke to her in a kind voice :

" Old woman ! Matresha ! What the matter with you ? "

He thought he had killed her to death, but the Lord pitied the frightened man : Granny Matrena recovered her breath, heard Mikhaila's voice, pulled him by the sleeve, said in a kind voice :

" Ekh, you, shameless, dishonest man ! "

Then Mikhaila felt relieved.

* * *

And the rumours were growing in the street : there was a general rising in the Cossacks' land, there was another general rising in Siberia. The generals were leading numberless troops, they were bringing liberation to the country people. The corn that the commune has taken from them will be returned. The horses will be returned. Everything will be returned. The general that rises in the Cossacks' land has said quite plainly :

' Do not doubt, old men. If you help me, I'll quickly finish up with them. Death to the Gubernia Alimentation Department, death to the District Alimentation Committee. The bolshevist pictures—to the stove ! "

And the other general, that rises in Siberia, has said quite plainly :

" A fixed price for corn, a fixed price for oats. He who takes it without paying will be put into prison for four months ! "

Potughin lay on the stove for five days : he had a shooting pain in his back. As soon as he heard about the generals—he felt relieved. He came out on the street and combed his beard as if on a holiday.

One must throw away the commune gods !

Trifon Samoylytch whispers :

" Oh, how they'll squeeze them ! "

And Maxim Ivanytch whispers :

" How they'll twist them ! "

And Prokhor Cheremushkin carries his eight boards on his soul like eight deadly sins. They do not give him any rest, break his sleep, pull him away from food. Prokhor jumps up in the night as if something pricked him and the generals are there : they stand before him as on a picture and their clerk with papers is also there.

" Are you Cheremushkin ? "

" Yes, I am."

" Did they take from you eight thick boards ? "

" Yes, they took them from me."

" Sign here ! "

The eight boards have nearly tormented him to death. He is not glad himself, he forgets his household and his work—he cannot stop himself. He is running from street to street and whispers :

" Twelve thousand Cossacks. . . . Land to be paid for, by terms. . . . The non-party people are safe." . . .

* * *

Andron sits at the Ispolkom like a stone—motionless. His eyebrows are drawn together, his neck is strained. He does not see the peasants with their ruffled beards—he sees the dark rustic life before him. Annushka also tightens her lips —she is thinking. Grishka Kopchik with a wooden leg reports to Andron :

" The peasants expect the generals to come, they want to screw off your head. What measures shall we take ? "

Andron is silent. Only his nostrils quiver, as if he climbs up a high mountain. He breaks the nib of the president's red pen-holder, breaks the pen-holder itself in two parts, and throws it under his feet.

" Fools ! "

He stands at the window for a long time, examining the well-known street of Roghatchevo. A woman passed with a child in her arms, a swine rolled down at the gates. The small cottages were crouching under their heavy thatched roofs. Mud, dung, poverty. And all the life is mud, dung, poverty. The father interferes, the mother interferes, every little cottage is concealing dark, rustic hate. One cannot

help pitying them, though one should not pity them. One must go ahead : against father and mother, against friends and comrades. Against all this life ! Thoughts glow in Andron's head, a heavy pain presses his temples.

" Fools ! "

He looked at Grishka Kopchik, and his eyes flashed.

" I'll kill them if they stand in my way ! I'll screw their heads off and will not pity them. I know what I am doing. War is war." . . .

* * *

Here is war for you.

Potughin lies on the stove—he feels weak. A general on one side, a general on the other side. Two generals stand on each side of him and say to him :

" Listen, Markel Semenytch : a fixed price for corn, a fixed price for oats. Do you want it ? "

The old man's heart is so pleased : he will receive the money. He peeps like a skunk out of his hole, and there is death standing on the threshold—the rustic death with a scythe on her shoulder.

" Repent, old man, here is an order for you from Andron ! " . . . .

One of his eyes saw dark, many-coloured spots danced before the other. There were roars, noises, shouts in the street. The Roghatchevo peasants arose, the rustic force kicked up the dust.

His daughter-in-law ran in from the court-yard and rushed straight to the stove :

" Father, the communists are taking the corn from the barns ! "

" Ekh, you, rustic force of an old oak tree,
Ekh, you, bread, watered with blood ! " . . .

Potughin flew off the stove like a falcon, forgetting his seventy-four years of age. His old back became straight, his nostrils quivered. He ran out with his ruffled hair, he saw his jagged little axe.

He clasped the axe-handle in his hand—war ! A general on one side, another general on the other side ! A fixed price for corn, a fixed price for oats !

Potughin saw Andron's cap with a red star—the ground

under his feet started to burn with a red flame. The cottages danced before his eyes, the brass trumpets roared in his ears. He sprang at Andron, lifted up his jagged little axe.

"Kill!"

Shouted and sat down.

Andron saw a stupid death before him—death from a jagged little axe—and got angry. He sprang back, snatched the revolver out of his leather bag.

"I will shoot!"

The iron pitchfork flashed from another side, the crowd roared:

"Kill!"

War is war.

Andron shot in the air, he did not like to thrash the peasants, but the bullet was there! Potughin sat down on the road, scratching the ground with his fingers. The bullet entered his side like a needle, bit him like a fly on a hot day.

The peasants gallop from one end of the village to another, like the steppe horses that have never known any curb. Their eyes are full of hate, the ground trembles under their unshod feet. A general rises in the Cossacks' land, a general rises in Siberia. A fixed price for corn, a fixed price for oats.

"Kill!"

"Ekh, you, rustic force of an old oak tree,
Ekh, you, bread watered with blood!"

Tarass Timofeytch lifted up an iron shovel—and missed. Andron's head with a red star gave him the slip. Tarass Timofeytch tumbled heavily down on the ground, stretching his arms crosswise on the road. He was also bitten by a small bullet, that hit him on the forehead.

War is war.

They chase Grishka Kopchik of the wooden leg along the main street of Roghatchevo, like fifty dogs chasing a wolf. Grishka sees his death from the peasants' hands—he runs into Andron's father's court-yard, but Mikhaila locks his door. Grishka scratches the locked door in his mortal fright—there is no escape. He rushed to the roof—his wooden leg slipped.

Death!

The ten strongest peasants tumbled him down and surrounded him. They tore Grishka's body with their twenty

hands, they trampled Grishka's body with their twenty feet. They trampled to death also Trifon Samoylytch who fell down together with Grishka.

War is war!

Prokhor Cheremushkin ran into the Ispolkom room with an iron pitchfork in his hands.

Kill!

He hooked on Karla Marksov in the front corner and carried him out like a rye sheaf. He bumped him down in the street—dance! The village of Roghatchevo dances a dance never seen before, whistles, roars, turns head over heels.

They tore Annushka's flag in two halves, they tore Andron's flag in two halves, too They tore them again and again, they made ribbons out of them.

Here!

War is war!

They tore off the wall the Land decree, the Alimentation decree, the Women's decree.

Trample!

A fixed price for corn, a fixed price for oats!

Rush to the District Alimentation Committee!

They caught Yashka Mazla in the street:

"Repent!"

They saw Annushka's little cottage:

"Set it on fire!"

They saw Andron's little cottage:

"Burn!"

The two little cottages caught fire at the two ends of the village, started to show red tongues out of their black thatched roofs. The livid hair bristled up on their heads, the fiery tears rolled. Mikhaila runs about with an empty pail, granny Matrena runs around with Andron's little coffer. There is nobody to save their things, there is nobody to fix the pump. The gelding with a red ribbon in his tail ran out of the court-yard, snorted and galloped along the street. The black hen ran out of the gates, stretching her neck, flapping her wings.

Death!

The wind twisted the livid hair, threw the sparks in every direction—started to play. The thatched roofs caught fire here and there, the axes began to strike the casements, the

window-panes clattered sharply. Oak logs, and coffers with torn off covers, crept out on the street. Broken ikons, small tubs, pails, sheep-skin coats, benches, bedsteads, pots, yokes and shovels flew out of the windows.

Fi-ire !

The fire-barrels gallop along the streets, the fire-machine with an out-of-order pump clatters. Women howl, dogs howl, horses neigh. Shouts, groaning, noise, roar.

War is war.

* * *

The wind has died down and become quiet. The waters stopped their noise and entered their bed. The moon came out in the dark night, and, lonely, looked out of a black cloud : at the desert fields, at the far-away villages and the neighbouring villages. The burnt chimneys stuck up, low complaints are heard.

Ashes.

It was not a Tartar chief who passed—it was a rustic army with their sharp pitchforks, their jagged axes.

Distress.

Andron stands in the dark night on the site of his father's burned house and presses his head, tied around with a handkerchief. A long way lies before him, a hard way—it is heavy to follow. The rustic sorrow crushes him, tears and complaints flood his heart. One cannot help pitying them, but one should not pity them. The hard way calls him forward : to walk on the low complaints, across the burnt chimneys, across the black rustic sorrow.

Andron's head, tied around with a handkerchief, bends down low ; a sharp pain presses his temples.

One cannot help pitying them, though one should not pity them !

1922. *Translated by* Lydia Jiburtovitch.

# Notes and Reviews.

## BRITONS NEVER SHALL BE BEES.*

Lord Beaverbrook is a much greater wizard than Lloyd George, and when he sits down and chats with the plain man and plain woman about his feats he is sure of a large audience. Such an affable wizard, the incarnation of the charm of all the black arts of printing, deserves the attention and respect of ofhers who consider themselves less plain, too.

The Press is in the position of Woman before her emancipation : it exercises great influences, but indirectly. It is unlikely that Lord Beaverbrook would advocate the abandonment of this form of power by the Press in exchange for a more explicit status. All he claims is as it were a woman's right to interfere in the most intimate way, and to the most decisive extent, with affairs of state. In this sense government by the Press, as it must exist to one degree or another in democratic countries, is a sort of matriarchate. It is our indirect western equivalent of the " strong man " favoured by Italians and Russians. We will not as yet stand a " strong man," but we will, as it were, put up with a strong woman. (The Little Old Woman of Shoe Lane might be invented to keep the Old Woman of Threadneedle Street company). It imports into government, however, the *personal* element surely enough. It is the first step towards personal rule, to which we, too, sooner or later, must come again, when Everyman has been proved as great a tyrant as the Individual, only slower, less effective and less responsible.

Lord Northcliffe, we are told in this book, coveted the position of Lord President of the Council. He of course had in him the germs of a Mussolini—he was nearer to Napoleon than is Lord Beaverbrook. In an interesting article Mr. Masterman writes as follows : " His (Lord Beaverbrook's) outlook and action in England are those of a foreigner, gazing on the struggle of British people in a spirit resembling that of Disraeli, who contemplated us as if we were so many ants or bees. This gives to the one as to the other both strength and weakness." Lord Beaverbrook is no doubt the most interesting figure in English political life since Lord Beaconsfield. But there the analogy ends.

When the much-heckled " Jix " exclaimed : " Some people would be all the better for a touch of Mussolini ! " the world laughed, for Sir Joynson-Hicks was the last person whom you would associate with such " touches." But anyone convinced of the benefit of that sort of ingredient would certainly find as much of it in ***Max*** as there is little of it in ***Jix.***

* " Politicians and the Press," by Lord Beaverbrook. Hutchinson, 1s.

But Lord Beaverbrook is not a Mussolini, any more than he is a Disraeli. To start with, he has no need to advertise his energy in his face in the way the Duce has. For a "self-advertiser" he is, as a private person, the most modest and least stridently assertive man that you could meet. The resolution and daring practical genius possessed by him certainly transpires in his presence, but with the minimum of fuss. And as a public figure the well-known mask of kindness and sagacity speaks for itself. That unmatched easiness, tolerance and geniality, the greatest Anglo-Saxon invention, a social and a political one, is his to a remarkable degree. So whether he regards Britons as Bees or not—I think it is evident he does not—this man from the New World and the West is entirely different to Disraeli, hailing so ostentatiously from the Old and the East—and even the most controversial part of it, namely what is technically known as the Ancient East—with his perfect insolence, grand Jewish manners, etc.

In spite of what Horatio was commanded to put down in his "tablets," and in spite of the Irish proverb concerning the "horn of the bull and the smile of the Saxon," the friendly Anglo-Saxon exterior must warm the heart of its possessor, inevitably. We do not need to invoke Dr. Coué's famous formula, or the more distant theories of William James, to be sure of that. The problem behind this small volume—that, of course, of the role of the Individual, irresponsible or self-responsible, in modern government—is solved by the personality of its author.

Everywhere that you turn in Europe to-day these two principles stand confronting each other: the principle represented by *The Individual* able and ready to intervene in this way or that at the moment of crisis in national affairs, and the principle represented by parliaments. The Comédie Française, for instance, a few days ago rejected two plays of opposite tendencies, called respectively *The Dictator* and *Danton*, on the ground of their liability to arouse, in opposite senses, political passions. All politics are ranged around these two extremes—which of course often meet, that cannot be avoided. The individual is, in any affair, the factor of simplification, as compared with the complex and often terribly clumsy operation of the principle of democratic rule. In Italy the ineffectiveness of parliamentary rule became so flagrant and disgraceful that the "strong man" was thrown up automatically.

How this problem finds its solution, as I have just said I believe it does, in the personality of Lord Beaverbrook, is as follows. Should the English tire of parliamentary rule, and cast about for a dictator, it is out of such material as his (which is the best material of their own race—so easy, freedom-loving and reliable) that they should make one, or choose somebody so composed. To save you from democracy you need a "democratic" saviour, for the dictatorial power and the democratic tradition would mutually check each other; and be an ideal combination, in short. So the Anglo-

Saxons, so favoured in the past by being chosen to give birth to the Mother of Parliaments, have a very good chance at present of inventing the ideal dictator. Let us hope they will seize this opportunity of again distinguishing themselves before such scowling condottieri as Mussolini impose their type on the world.

WYNDHAM LEWIS.

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# Notes on Music.

## (V).—HECTOR BERLIOZ

THE position of Berlioz among composers is probably unique. Throughout his lifetime, from the very outset of his career even, his work never ceased to provoke the wildest enthusiasm on the one hand, and the most violent hostility on the other ; and even to-day, although he has been dead for over fifty years, the musical world is still as sharply divided into two camps as it was a century ago. To his admirers he is one of the very greatest of all composers, together with Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, and above all others ; to his adversaries he is a less than second-rate figure, a mere scene-painter in sounds, with nothing but a gift for orchestration to commend him. If the latter are probably in the majority, the former make up for their numerical inferiority by a fanaticism which opposition only serves to strengthen and confirm.

But although Berlioz is the object of a cult, it is one which, unlike most other cults, is entirely devoid of preciosity. Further, his worshippers make no propaganda on his behalf. Like the Druses, they are a race apart ; they do not seek to make converts, because they do not want them. You are either one of them or you are not. Either you receive at once, from the very first work of his which you hear, a thrill akin to an electric shock, or else you are completely insulated and rendered for ever immune by a pachydermatous rubber hide of indifference.

The reasons why his music does not, and never can, appeal to the majority are readily understandable. The original conceptions and daring experiments in it which repel the academicians in general, and the Brahmsians in particular, are equally uncongenial to those who go to music mainly for its emotional and physical appeal, for they are primarily addressed to the intellectual and imaginative faculties of the listener. His strength and virility likewise disconcert the aesthetes and those who appreciate only the caviare and high game of music. Finally, he never does the expected, and this is for most people the virtue which cannot be forgiven.

Of all those who have written about him, it is perhaps the poet Heine who has best defined the paradoxical duality of Berlioz's genius when he called him a " Gigantic nightingale, a lark the size of an eagle, such as they say existed in the primitive world." And

of all his works the one which best exemplifies this titanic sweetness, this sublimity so strangely blent with tenderness—the work of which Berlioz himself said that if he were faced with the prospect of the total destruction of all his compositions with only a single exception, it was the one for which he would ask grace—this work is surely the great *Messe des Morts*, or *Requiem*.

In his volume of essays entitled *Von der Einheit der Musik*, Ferruccio Busoni says that the performance of a great musical work should partake of the character of a religious ceremony or masonic ritual, which should only take place at rare intervals and on special occasions ; and this same idea was undoubtedly present in Wagner's mind when he conceived the project of building a theatre of his own in a remote Bavarian village for the performance of his music-dramas. It was with some such feeling of participation in a solemn rite that one took the iron road to Manchester, that city of mephitic gloom and grime which has become the Mecca of all true Berlioz worshippers since Sir Hamilton Harty took charge of the Hallé Orchestra some years ago, in order to attend the performance of the *Requiem*, which was given on November 12—probably the first within the memory of the present generation in this country.

Concerning the performance itself it is only necessary to say that one's very high expectations of the work were not disappointed, but justified and confirmed. The only fault one could possibly find in it was, under the circumstances, unavoidable, on account of the restricted dimensions of the Free Trade Hall, which did not permit of the disposition of the brass orchestra in four groups, one at each corner of the *ensemble*, as directed by the composer, but only in two. Consequently a few of the orchestral effects did not quite come off as they should have done, particularly the fantastic combination of flutes and trombones which occurs in the *Hostias* and in the *Agnus Dei*.

In his *Mémoires* Berlioz tells us that the whole work was written with the utmost rapidity. " Ma tête semblait prête à crever sous l'effort de ma pensée bouillonnante. Le plan d'un morceau n'était pas esquissé que celui d'un autre se presentait ; dans l'impossibilité d'écrire assez vite, j'avais adopté des signes sténographiques." Even without this knowledge the impression which the work makes in performance is that it has been conceived and executed in one single unflagging burst of creative inspiration. At the same time, one of its most remarkable features consists in the degree of restraint which the composer displays in employing the enormous material resources at his disposal. With the exception of the *Tuba Mirum*, *Lacrimosa*, and *Rex Tremendae*, the level of dynamic intensity is comparatively low throughout. What other composer, in a work consisting of eleven movements, would have made such sparing use of the vast instrumental and vocal resources which he had at his command, including four brass bands and no fewer than sixteen kettledrums ? Here we touch on the main source of Berlioz's

comparative unpopularity with the multitude. Most of them feel that they are not getting their money's worth if the whole orchestra, and the organ as well, are not kept blaring away all the time. And when, as in the *Sanctus*, for example, traditional treatment leads them to expect a terrific and sustained outburst from the whole choir and orchestra, their disappointment becomes intense irritation when the composer gives them instead a quiet tenor solo with a tremolo string accompaniment. But the quite overwhelming effect of the *Tuba Mirum* and the *Lacrimosa* depends precisely on the contrast which they present with the other movements.

The *Messe des Morts* stands alone in music; there is nothing with which one can fitly compare it. Beside it Beethoven's great *Mass in D* is only a magnificent failure, and one can only think of the *Mass* of Bach, among works of equal scope and similar dimensions, which could be placed above it—though I see that Mr. W. J. Turner, in the *New Statesman*, disputes even this exception.

The most remarkable quality in almost all of Berlioz's music is its supreme originality. It is often said that a great musical work is always the outcome of a definite tradition and a long period of evolution. This may be true as a generalisation, but it fails to take account of Berlioz, whose greatest work owes nothing to any predecessor. Almost alone among innovators and experimenters, he was able to turn his back upon the past, and yet achieve work of lasting power and beauty. In that unknown land of boundless extent which girds about the narrow beaten track of musical tradition—a Sahara desert wherein so many visionaries and adventurous spirits have wandered, lost themselves, and perished—Berlioz has reared up gigantic pyramids of sound which will endure as long as music itself. Will this never be realised? How much longer is one of the greatest figures in all art to be a target for the malice and impertinence of the hack journalists who write about music for a living? But, after all, as Heine says somewhere, the more splendid a monument is, the more dogs there are that will come and lift up their legs against it.

CECIL GRAY.

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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MEDAL. By EDWARD THOMPSON. HOGARTH PRESS. 5s.

DR. EDWARD THOMPSON has done most courageously in publishing this book. As Reader in Bengali at Oxford University, he has nothing to gain and a good deal to lose by this "re-statement of unpleasant events," as one of his colleagues untruthfully put it to me, "with which everyone has long been familiar." The Medal is the Mutiny Medal; and Dr. Thompson is demanding a belated admission from English official historians that cruelty, treachery, panic and atrocity were not only found on the Indian side; that deeds of heroism and mercy were not the monopoly of the English.

It may be trite to observe that History has two aspects, " A " history, concerned with the present, and " B " history, concerned with events that are quite over and done with. " B " historians are at pains when discussing, say, the fortunes of the First Triumvirate, the relations of Stephen and Matilda, or the conquest of Egypt by Alexander, to weigh the motives and merits of all parties concerned with as much justice as the bias of previous " A " historians permits. But the trouble is, so little " B " history is possible; so few events worth recording are really ended.

In India our " A " history of the Mutiny has had two phases; in both, the guilt of the mutineers has been fully insisted upon, and the justice of their punishment upheld, but in the earlier, the contemporary phase, no attempt was made to conceal the fact that expediency made these punishments very terrible ones, ten eyes being usually demanded for one eye, and a hundred teeth for one tooth; mere geographical nearness to a scene of rebellion was sufficient cause for indiscriminate slaughter of the civil population. In the second phase, there is no mention of any such terrorism, nor any indication that the merely military mutiny was not isolated from a civil and political context. The text-books of history recommended or insisted upon by the Indian Government for use in all educational centres belong to the second phase, and it is about these that Dr. Thompson makes chief complaint; contending that they cause a deep subterranean resentment in India which can find no adequate vent. Any native publication reflecting at all on British military prestige would be in danger of immediate suppression, and they have to be content with a cycle of word-of-mouth " A " history as inaccurate in its additions and exaggerations as English " A " history has been in its omissions and diminutions.

Dr. Thompson's book, then, is a short supplement to the present official histories, restoring the evidence of the earlier unblushing phase and supplementing this with material ironically culled from the most respectable and authentic later sources. Rejecting all accounts that, like Savarkar's proscribed and hate-hysterical history, would prejudice his case, he finds quite enough indiscreet matter in the fat ill-written biographies of Mutiny veterans to justify his deep resentment; particularly deep against works like Sir George Forrest's three-volume *History of the Indian Mutiny*, in which there is to be found no reference, even a slanting one, to any excesses committed by the English forces.

The Mutiny, Dr. Thompson finds, was certainly not a mere military revolt, but a widespread political insurrection, fomented by Lord Dalhousie's rapid and vast annexations and by the East India Company's endeavour to satisfy its shareholders in England at the expense of local obligations and treaties.

There is abundant evidence that in the English reprisals that followed the outbreak, no humanity was shown; even loyal Indians —grooms, orderlies, water-carriers, and so on—were treated most

vindictively and barbarously. Later, something like fifty thousand natives of varying ages and sex were hanged without trial, and on the flimsiest pretext, by volunteer hanging parties. Two Europeans constituted a legal quorum, and it was a matter for jesting, as we learn from Delane's *Life*, when such parties went off to hang their local creditors. The Cawnpore massacre, for which, by the way, Nana Sahib was not directly responsible, was avenged by a far more gruesome and cold-blooded massacre at Amritsar—no! not the Dyer affair—of 500 disarmed and innocent Sepoys who had never mutinied, but were stampeded by panic when one of their number went insane and killed a European officer. The account by the murderer, Frederick Cooper, in his book, "The Crisis in the Punjab," is one of the most singularly criminal confessions extant. He disposed of the dead in a disused well to match that at Cawnpore, and had his actions approved by Headquarters. To mutineers there was never any quarter given. A subaltern, writing home to his sister, informed her:

"You must not think, darling Harriet, that I pity the sepoys or blackguards who are rebelling against us. On the contrary, few are more unrelenting than I am. When a prisoner is brought in, I am the first to call out to have him hanged."

This subaltern lived to become one of our national heroes—Field Marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar, having gained his V.C. by a most daring exploit in this war. But among our enemies there were also not a few heroes. The Rani of Jhansi, who died fighting against us, has become the Indian Joan of Arc; Prince Firoz Shah, who did much to restrain reprisals on the Indian side, was as courageous and resourceful as any English soldier, but he recognised his cause as hopeless, and knew that if he was captured he could at best expect to be hanged. He died in 1866, it is believed, as a beggar in Arabia. And there were others.

It will be interesting to see the effect this book has in India; if, indeed, it is permitted to circulate there. Whether its publication by a writer of Dr. Thompson's standing and reputation will have a soothing or irritant effect cannot be prohpesied. But it is a good thing that it has been written, if only for the information of Englishmen brought up, as the present writer was, on doctored "A" history; who, while sceptical of the legends of Cawnpore and Delhi, have hitherto been unable to get other evidence of the facts. It is a good thing also that the author has not lessened the effect of his book by ironic or witty writing: the temptation must have been strong. To have, for instance, used as a front-page decoration one of the designs (reproduced in General Stewart's *Life and Letters*) considered for the Mutiny Medal, on the reverse of which appears a gallows triumphantly loaded. ROBERT CRAVES.

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ENGLISH POEMS. By Edmund Blunden. Cobden-Sanderson. 6s.

Mr. Blunden is a long time sweating the romantic out of his

system. In a predominant mood of wistful retrospection, he applies to his wounded sensibility the once so efficacious balm of melodious phrases evocative of the time before it was true that

" . . . creeping on, the shade of death
Has changed this air."

Convinced that

"To each his own ; I run a backward race.
I have been wandering distant roads, have striven
To win new comprehensions ; much in vain.
There's that within me cares not what is given
By such migrations ; . . ."

he awaits the moment

" When June's white-throated warm convolvulus
From the green hedge seems wisdom watching you,"

determined at that juncture to

"Gaze, gaze and gaze ; here's chance harmonious."

But the quality of the verse in which the poet celebrates such harmonious moments reveals how factitious and ephemeral is the satisfaction he receives from them. Metre-padding prepositions and polysyllables, inversions and circumlocutions for convenience in rhyming indicate to what an extent Mr. Blunden's reconstructions of a state of pastoral innocence have become works of hope rather than of faith. For truly

"Reason, still mining in her rocks and reefs,
Is still refining" and "doubt grows doubly strong."

The cleavage thus persisting, the poet co-opts natural phenomena into the struggle :—

"Thistles, most, jump from the marl
Baring teeth in sullen snarl," while martins "have their white breasts warm with love," incidentally revealing how literary are the sources of this ineffective animism by his adaptation from the spells of the more potent conjurers of the past.

In more sententious mood, he moralises on the antithetical universe thus evoked in an appropriately 18th century idiom :—

" Poor as church mice, yet rich at every turn,
Who never knew that man was made to mourn.
Diminishes the pools that pleased the kine."

This breakdown in Mr. Blunden's indubitable talent for fresh and delicate transcriptions from nature, may be regarded as symptomatic of a process of readjustment taking place in the poet himself. It indicates not a collapse, but a reorganisation of sensibility very necessary if Mr. Blunden's work is not to consist of progressively diluted repetitions of his early successes. The way of his future development is uncertain, but a possible line is shown by a number of fantastic poems scattered about the four sections of this book. In these, that have every appearance of being direct registrations of dreams, Mr. Blunden's verse, slow-footed still, acquires rhythmical vigour, his diction individuality and precision

They have, too, a pleasant freedom from oratorical expansion that enables him to resume unhampered his faculty for suggestive visualisation. C. H. RICKWORD.

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DON JUAN. By JAMES ELROY FLECKER. Heinemann. 6s.

It is Flecker's idea in writing *Don Juan* which alone makes the play interesting, for the verse in it, with one possible exception, has not even the oozy glamour of Hassan or his lyrics, and dramatically it is only occasionally successful. He was prompted to experiment with this form as a result of his dissatisfaction with "little petty lyrics," and most poets will sympathise with him. Wordsworth, with the same desire for a larger framework on which to build, attempted to coerce the epic to his needs, but the machinery at his disposal was not sufficient to bear the strain. *Hyperion* was unfinished. Tennyson, with the self-confidence of his age, covered a creaking skeleton with factitiously virginal flesh, but the *Idylls* continually betray their necrogenic origin; and there is a musty smell about the more vital Browning. In our own time the question has become even more difficult of solution. Of the few who have attempted a long poem, Mr. Doughty and Mr. Hardy are the most impressive: the conception of *The Dynasts* is arresting, but it is the prose content which holds it together and poetically it is a failure.

It is possible that a long poem cannot be achieved out of the modern consciousness, and this theory has found many followers since the time of Poe, but the question will continue to be mooted while poetry is a living art. It is certain that, if such a poem is to be written, it will demand a form as new as Mr. Joyce has found for the degenerating novel. Flecker's play is interesting because it points to a possible one—prose giving way to poetry under dramatic compulsion. *Don Juan*, however, is only a prose play interspersed at random with verse dialogue and unattached lyrics. The prose is banally realistic, whereas to get this newness of form it should have been broken up and vitalised to a point at which the transition to poetry would have been inevitable. In his later play Flecker showed no signs of mastering this form, for *Hassan* is on a lower level than that which he seems to have been aiming at here.

DOUGLAS GARMAN.